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ABSTRACT

This special issue of the serial SET for 1996 contains seven newly commissioned articles and four reprints all related to the education of children at risk. This issue includes: (1) "Students at Risk: An Overview" (Margaret Batten, Graeme Withers, and Jean Russell); (2) "Inquiry into Children in Education at Risk through Truancy and Behavioural Problems" (New Zealand House of Representatives); (3) "Tackling Bullying in Schools: The Findings from Interventions" (Mark Cleary, Peter K. Smith, and Sonia Sharp); (4) "Truancy in Adolescence" (David M. Fergusson, Michael T. Lynskey, and L. John Horwood); (5) "Keeping Ourselves Safe: Who Benefits?" (Freda Briggs and Russell M. F. Hawkins); (6) "There Will Still Be Days: Profile of a Truant" (Patricia Berwick-Emms); (7) "Family Violence and Children: Their Experience, the Impact, and How Schools Can Respond" (Paula Shepherd); (8) "Sexual Harassment in School: The Public Performance of Gendered Violence" (Nan Stein); (9) "Why So Many Adolescent Girls Want To Lose Weight" (Vivienne Adair and Robyn Dixon); (10) "The Importance of Classroom Climate for At-Risk Learners" (Cecilia Pierce); and (11) "Violence in Schools: Principals' Perspectives" (Colin McCraith). Each paper contains its own notes. (SLD)

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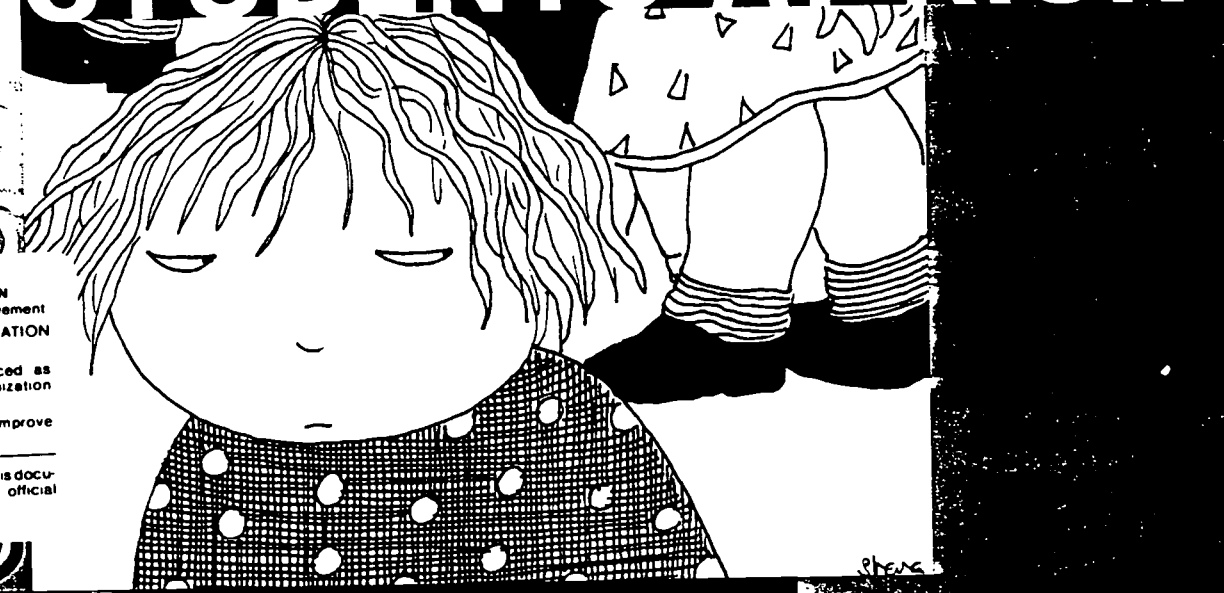

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STUDENTS AT RISK

SPECIAL

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"At risk" is an emotive, yet relative term. The ***set*** *Special* for 1996 looks at the behavioural aspects of students at risk: the cycle of how, when, where, and why children in education become at risk of failing through truancy, behavioural problems, or violence (at home or school).

To help schools begin to tackle their part in the cycle, we present a collection of seven newly commissioned articles and four reprints from previous editions of ***set***: *Research Information for Teachers*. There are overviews from the Australian and New Zealand perspectives; two articles on truancy; three on violence and bullying in schools; one on the impact of family violence; one which touches on the health aspects of at-risk girls; one with positive suggestions for classroom teachers; and a study on the effectiveness of the *Keeping Ourselves Safe* program.

These are certainly not the only areas of "at risk" which impact on schools and teaching. We acknowledge, but could not include in this issue, research on the effects of poverty and socioeconomic factors; the many health issues, for example teen suicide, attention deficit disorders, educational strategies for chronically ill students; and the more specific aspects of failing to achieve academic potential.

All the more to save for future editions of ***set***: *Research Information for Teachers*!

Judith Wright
Editor

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STUDENTS AT RISK: AN OVERVIEW

Margaret Batten, Graeme Withers, Jean Russell
Australian Council for Educational Research

Over the past two decades, increasing attention has been paid to the needs of teenage students who are not achieving the same academic and social development levels as their peers. Schools, state and federal governments, and community organisations have put into place programs to cater for the particular needs of these students at risk.

Two of these organisations in Australia approached the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to undertake reviews of the literature on programs for students at risk, one (for the Queens Trust, Australia) on Australian programs, mainly school based, the other (for the Dusseldorp Skills Forum) on North American and British programs, both school and community based. Because of the requirements of the funding agencies, it was not possible to include a review of the New Zealand literature on students at risk. In the review of Australian literature, it was agreed that, although reference would be made to the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, it would require a separate review to cover this area adequately.

The two reviews (see Notes) form the basis of this article.

Who are the students at risk?

"Students at risk" is a catch phrase that has entered into common parlance, and it is often assumed that we all mean the same thing by it. The Students at Risk Component of the Australian National Equity Program for Schools targets "those students most at risk of not completing secondary school". However, early school leaving on its own is not a sufficient definition of the risk faced by these students. As the Education Department in South Australia has pointed out:

> ... the increased attendance and retention rates of the students who were at risk of leaving school early must be directly commensurate with an increase in the students' participation and attainment. Otherwise, it could be argued, what is the point?

Our definition of students at risk includes those who are likely to leave before completing Year 12 and those not achieving their full potential.

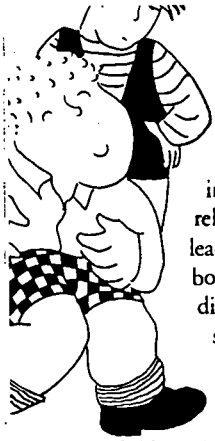
In the literature, many factors are discussed as being associated with or causally related to early school leaving and under-achievement. Although our risk factors are listed under three discrete headings, there is often an overlap and linking between factors; for instance, low family income, family conflict, and family breakdown may be seen to lead to an individual's reduced self-confidence, pessimism about the future, and homelessness, which in turn lead to educational under-achievement and early school leaving among other outcomes.

The individual's nature and behaviour

- Low self-esteem has been linked to low achievement, and nearly all programs for students at risk specifically aim to increase the self-esteem of students. Berengarra School in Melbourne provides programs for secondary students with moderate to profound learning difficulties, many of whom experience social or emotional difficulties and have a record of chronic dysfunction in mainstream schools. The aim of the school is to break the cycle and support students back into mainstream educational settings or into the workforce. From their observation of Berengarra students, Candy and Baker concluded that the most common characteristic is low self-esteem; they saw this as underlying the students' varied social and emotional problems, and their dysfunctional behaviour, including the high rate of attempted suicide. One of the main aims of the programs in the school is to re-establish self-esteem.
- Low motivation, a lack of interest in schooling, has been found to be a major factor in low participation in education. Various studies have shown that changes in curriculum content and teaching practice can increase student involvement and enthusiasm for learning. The crucial elements seem to be increasing the relevance of the curriculum to student interests and capacities, encouraging and facilitating student participation in determining program goals and how to achieve them, and promoting regular student experience of success.
- Disruptive behaviour in and out of the classroom is often a symptom of underlying personal and family problems. Candy and Baker identified a range of disruptive behaviours at home and school which in their experience characterise the students who enter the special program at Berengarra School: hyperactivity; inappropriate attention-seeking; temper tantrums; offensive language; frustration and abrasiveness; verbal and physical provocation of others; inability to accept criticism; refusal to take responsibility for one's own behaviour; attempted suicide. They see such behaviours as the symptoms of social and emotional problems, with low self-esteem commonly playing an associated role. Such behaviours often lead to the consequences of further problems at home, truancy, suspension and expulsion from other schools, and low educational achievement.
- Drug use and substance abuse among students have been the subject of a large number of studies. There seems to be an association between drug usage and early school leaving, complicated by interwoven factors that lead to drug abuse, such as homelessness, truancy, low self-esteem, and lack of support networks. One study made the point that drug and alcohol abuse may also be a consequence of early school leaving, claiming that students who leave school because they experience problems not addressed by school and the wider community find that the problems are not solved by this step but that further problems develop, one of which may be drug abuse.
- Poor academic performance is a strong indicator of early school leaving, and is often linked to truancy (as both a cause and a consequence) and to youth homelessness. Low achievement is not necessarily the outcome of low ability. Candy and Baker reported that at Berengarra School 57 percent of the students are of average IQ and 30 percent above average IQ, although the students generally display language and numeracy levels several years behind their age peers. In addition to designing a program which assists the students to resolve their social, emotional and behavioural problems, the school provides a curriculum which enables students to catch up academically.

The family

- Low socioeconomic status of families has been associated with early school leaving, low income in particular, but also low levels of parental education. From the evidence presented to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in Australia in 1989, Burdekin concluded that family poverty was a highly significant factor in homelessness, which in turn affects school



participation. The constant struggle to make ends meet creates stress on the family living in poverty and tensions in family relationships, which in turn can lead to conflict and abuse. Clothes, books and school excursions are difficult or impossible to finance, so children are stigmatised. Activities such as holidays away from home and visits to places of interest are not available, so children's learning and understanding of their world is restricted.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have a lower retention rate than the overall Australian rates: 33 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were retained to Year 12 in 1993 compared with 77 percent of all Australian students. There is a similar disparity in rates of academic achievement, and Aboriginal students in remote areas are disadvantaged in these respects to a far greater extent than Aboriginal students in urban or more closely settled rural areas.
- Dysfunctional family structures can affect student performance and behaviour. Family dysfunction can take the form of conflict, abuse, excessive mobility, negative modelling, and disturbed parent-child relationships. Family dysfunction can also have an indirect effect on educational under-achievement and early school leaving through its contribution to youth homelessness; Burdekin refers to young people leaving home, and subsequently leaving school, when the level of family dysfunction becomes too great to bear.

The school

- Inflexible school organisational structures can contribute to early school leaving. The literature identifies a number of steps that can be taken to increase the flexibility of school organisation, such as: flexible starting and finishing times for the school day; facilitation of part-time study and part-time work for students; timetabling which allows vertical grouping of students, the widest possible combination of subjects, and extended time to complete Years 11 and 12; a discipline and welfare policy which stresses the development of individual responsibility; and a school structure, such as the senior college, which places older students in an adult environment.
- A narrow range of subjects, inadequate access to practical studies, unstimulating learning processes, and irrelevant curricula have all been shown to have a strong influence on students' decisions to stay at school or to leave, and on their willingness to participate fully in the educational process.
- Lack of academic and personal support for students can increase the risk of under-achievement and early leaving. In the area of personal development, school counsellors often play a critical role in the progress of students at risk. The report from an Australian Government inquiry into violence in schools in 1994 stressed the importance of school counsellors in addressing issues of student behaviour, and recognised their unique position to work in both a preventative and remedial way in the area of school violence. In similar vein, the Burdekin Report stressed the critical role of school counsellors in assisting those at risk of homelessness and those already homeless. Both reports deplored the decreasing numbers of counsellors and psychologists available to children and young people as a result of reduced education budgets. Professional development is seen as an effective way of ensuring that appropriate academic support is provided to students at risk, by raising teacher awareness of family and social factors connected with risk and by providing teachers with access to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for the successful implementation of a range of intervention strategies.

Key issues to consider in programs for students at risk

Some of the researchers and practitioners in Australia who have written about students at risk not only examine risk factors or describe the program implementation, but also discuss difficult or unresolved issues connected with effective program operation.

Identification of risk

Schools often find it a problem to identify accurately the students who are most at risk in their classrooms. It is helpful to seek indicators which are behavioural signs or manifestations of vulnerability, since such behaviour can be observed in schools by those prepared to take action.

There are two issues that schools should be alerted to when developing a strategy for accurate identification of students at risk. The first issue concerns those students who are easily overlooked. It is easy to identify students who are at risk because of disruptive behaviour, but schools often overlook the withdrawn, passive, disengaged students (usually girls) who opt out, do not participate, under-achieve, and/or leave early as a result. Girls are frequently seen to respond to harassment in schools by becoming withdrawn and passive, sometimes also deliberately under-achieving in order to escape attention. Another group in danger of escaping the preventative risk net are pregnant girls and teenage mothers; these girls often slip away without notice from the educational scene, sometimes withdrawing because the school does not know how to respond to their particular personal and educational needs. A study undertaken in South Australia reported that few adolescent mothers complete their schooling, irrespective of their desire to do so. The barriers they face are intimidating: for example, harassment; negative attitudes of staff; fear amongst staff/parents of the example set to others; pressure after the birth resulting from fatigue; the need to care for the child; and costs. There is a high failure rate among those young mothers who try to remain at school.

A third group that warrants attention is homeless youth. Few homeless young people continue their schooling, even if they are below the legal school leaving age. Research has shown that programs which are established to help young homeless people remain in education must provide: financial and physical assistance (for example, food, accommodation and an environment conducive to study), emotional support, safety, adult support workers, health and guidance counselling, a supportive and encouraging school environment, an appropriate curriculum (negotiated and participative), absence of restrictive school policies and practices, promotion of self-esteem, motivation and trust in self and others, and provision of advocacy for the students.

Another issue raised in the literature concerning the identification of risk is the school level at which the identification strategies should be activated. The focus of many current programs is on the middle and upper years of secondary school, but often the signs of students being at risk can be detected much earlier, in students' primary school years. Some obvious signs are a dislike of school and a failure to learn to read.

Achievement and behaviour

An issue that has been the subject of debate, not just for students at risk but for all students, is the relative importance of social and personal development alongside academic development in a school program. The issue is of particular importance in programs for students at risk, because behaviour problems are often identified as the prime barrier to educational progress.

If behaviour management was a component of a program, the question arose "Who should conduct behaviour management programs – school staff who know the students, or outside personnel who have more appropriate professional training?" In a Northern Territory program, it was reported that students perceived strong benefits from the direct servicing personnel not being members of the school staff. This independence enabled greater trust and openness, and ensured confidentiality, which students thought made the process more effective.

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Welfare

It is sometimes difficult for schools to judge how far their responsibility for their students extends. How active should schools be in providing welfare support for students at risk? Staff at Ardoch-Windsor Secondary College in Victoria provided extensive welfare help for homeless students, because they believed that until the housing, financial support, health and welfare of students were secure, then educational provision for these students would fail. The experiences of staff at Paralowie R-12 School in South Australia were similar: "Hungry, abused, worried and depressed people are not efficient learners."

The immediacy of the need for welfare assistance can be a problem. Students' educational problems often do not originate in the school but in some family or social trauma. Traditionally, schools look to welfare agencies for support, but often community welfare services are available only after a point of crisis. An alternative to schools going out to agencies is for agencies to come to the school, as in a pilot infrastructure program in Victoria, in which a part time Community Officer was located on school premises with the responsibility of bringing in the welfare services as required by students and their families, so that the school became a focal point for a range of community services.

Flexibility and structure

A cluster of schools in Western Australia worked together to implement a program for students at risk, and identified a lot of inflexibility in the existing government school structure: for instance, teacher union regulation of working hours limits the capacity of the school to offer timetables which enable students to fit schooling around work and other commitments. Other factors which mitigated against program success were the staffing profile (with inadequate welfare support staff), facilities (no common rooms, no public telephones, no child care), and regulations about compulsory attendance.

A preparedness to be flexible within a clearly articulated structure was an acknowledged reason for the success of the program at Berengarra school, with its emotionally disturbed students. For these students, the school represented a place of constancy, with a staff and structure that were responsive to their needs.

Assessment and evaluation

Assessment is the "lost" issue in programs for students at risk. In the literature, there is considerable discussion of teaching styles and teacher-student relationships in programs for students at risk, but there is very little on assessment. In a study of assessment in schools designated as disadvantaged, it was found that staff favoured individualised assessment, where the student is compared with her/himself, not with others. However, the authors go on to point out an inbuilt hazard with the use of individualised assessment with students at risk. The more continuous the assessment, the more intensive the surveillance, which may be counterproductive with these students.

Learning environment

A good attendance record was seen by many writers as a critical element in ensuring a student's success, and not just as a matter of fulfilling departmental requirements. The comment was made that poor attendance is not only a marker for identifying students at risk – it can actually create or intensify the risk. Those students who are already marginalised have the greatest need to participate fully in the life of the school.

Curriculum flexibility and responsiveness was another issue addressed by successful programs for students at risk. There was a perceived need for program diversity, as no one program would be able to meet all the needs of students at risk. It was suggested that an appropriate curriculum was one which was broad based, including vocational, certified and accredited courses as electives alongside traditional core subjects. This approach might be implemented from as early as Year 9. An integrated curriculum should be based on skills acquisition and on content reflecting students' interests and needs.

One source of contention in many of the schools which implemented programs for students at risk was the way in which pedagogy was enacted in the classroom. It was felt by some practitioners that traditional approaches to teaching in an academic environment were inappropriate, with their emphasis on control and didactic methods. The principal of a school in South Australia which catered effectively for many students at risk felt that negotiation was the key to engaging students in learning, as evidenced by the title of her article – *One, two, three, four: how do you stop the classroom war? Two, four, six, eight: it's easy, just negotiate.*

What can we learn from overseas programs for students at risk?

The principal focus of the Australian review was on school-based programs and young people in early and mid-adolescence, while the review of literature in North America and Britain focused in the main on young people after they had left school, although many of the studies referred back to young people's experience of school. There were several strategies or approaches raised in the overseas literature that did not feature as much, if at all, in the Australian literature, but which deal with important issues in the development of effective programs for students at risk.

Mentors and mentoring

The use of mentors as key personnel to work directly with youth has become an increasing part of practice in the United States over the past decade. The mentor may be a teacher in a school or come from business, industry or the community.

The influence of the mentor is seen to be primarily preventative, in helping young people negotiate or avoid unacceptable behaviour or unhealthy lifestyles, but mentors also have a developmental role, for instance helping young people cope with social circumstances or improve communication and problem-solving skills. Mentoring is an especially powerful intervention in the lives of isolated or homeless youth who are deprived of meaningful contact with adults even when surrounded by them. American writers on the topic see it as very important that there should be a match between mentors and youths in terms of temperament, background, experience, race and gender. In addition mentoring should take place within a formal, well supported organisation, and at its best be integrated into a larger educational or career development program.

Some writers point to a gap between the fine rhetoric about mentoring and the reality of actual practice. Too often, there is too wide a gap between the worlds of the mentor and young person, and often adults who volunteer as mentors do not have sufficient time to devote to the task. However, some effective programs are described in the literature, among them a program called *MENTOR* in which the members of over 550 law firms in 20 states have each taken responsibility for working directly with students. Project *ASPIRE* initially involved 95 employees of a company who worked in one-to-one relationships with students identified as likely drop-outs. In its first year, only one of the 95 students dropped out, compared with an 11 percent drop-out rate for the rest of the student body. In addition, 95 percent of the mentored students were promoted, compared with 50 percent of the non-mentored students.

The review summarises a set of prescriptions provided by one author which give a clear and detailed articulation of the way in which a mentoring network might be set up to maximise the advantages which many see in the procedure, based on the assumption that mentoring is first and foremost a community activity, involving groups and personnel from beyond the school walls.

Youth mediation

Mediation has been a key strategy over recent years in behaviour management practice in schools in Australia and overseas, using teachers and counsellors as mediators in situations where students demonstrate unacceptable

behaviours. Another concept which has gained increasing support in schools is peer support, in which older students act as tutors and mentors to younger students. There is a growing trend in the United States for a strategy that combines both these approaches, in which at-risk youth work directly with their peers in a prevention program.

Hundreds of youth mediation programs are reported as operating in the United States, and they claim to have achieved some real successes. Evaluation studies, interviews and anecdotes point to decreased violence in schools and, particularly, enhanced conflict resolution skills among students trained as mediators. In a survey of 66 school principals who had implemented a mediation program all the following outcomes of such programs were cited by at least three-quarters of the principals as evidence that mediation programs are "effective" or "highly effective": increasing self-confidence, improving problem-solving skills, increasing self-esteem, developing leadership skills, improving communication skills, reducing student violence, resolving school-based disputes, promoting active listening, and changing attitudes about conflict.

Summer youth employment programs

As well as the traditional summer youth camps, provision of summer youth employment programs has a higher profile in the United States than it does in Australia. They exist, of course, for all youth, but may well have special applicability within attempts to cater better for the needs of at-risk youth.

One report describes in detail the structures, strategies and outcomes of summer youth employment programs at their most effective. The basis of program organisation and operation must be a coalition or partnership between schools, employers, community-based organisations and service agencies. The emphasis should be on combining academic enrichment with actual work experience.

The following elements form a sort of simple rationale for the design and implementation of such programs:

- out of school youth need enrichment too, and can participate alongside youth still in schools;
- real educational development can take place during summer jobs;
- skill-building is a primary emphasis;
- non-traditional learning methods should pre-dominate;
- such programs should actively combine work and learning;
- for in-school youth, summer programs can help to arrest learning losses over summer.

Some of the points made about necessary conditions to the design and operation of successful summer programs are:

- there should be an accent on skill transfer through the combination of work and learning;
- whatever strategies are chosen, there should be every attempt to make them different from school approaches;
- both initially and later, employment-related learning should seek to use functional context instruction;
- in setting up the program, organisers should make sure the learning environment never feels like a classroom;
- there will be opportunities, which should be maximised, to link the program to year-round efforts for participants still in-school, both as to program and to assessments.

Features of successful programs for students at risk

There is a common introduction to the two companion reviews of the literature on students at risk in Australia and overseas. The introduction concludes with a summary of the recurring features of effective programs referred to in the Australian and international literature that result in real achievement by young people:

- attention to the whole person, incorporating social and personal as well as academic and vocational development;
- a focus on practical learning, related to the student's life experiences and linked, where appropriate, to a vocational pathway;
- encouragement of students to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, and to be involved in decisions about the learning process, including the use of incentives and negotiated contracts;
- providing students with the opportunity to work cooperatively with others, both inside and outside the classroom;
- high expectations of students, and provision of programs which challenge and extend;
- positive reinforcement of achievement, building on student strengths;
- establishment of a caring, supportive environment;
- organisational and operational flexibility in order to be able to respond to individual needs;
- concern for students at risk that extends beyond the program through the use of follow-up contact and monitoring;
- appropriate evaluation of student progress by the use of assessment that matches the learning that has taken place; and evaluation of the effectiveness of programs;
- careful selection of program teachers and leaders, and the provision of professional development opportunities for people in those roles;
- integration of school-based programs for students at risk into mainstream educational provision;
- involvement of parents and community in a collaborative endeavour for young people at risk, and a fostering of links with agencies outside the school or program.

To counterbalance this evidence of successful programs, the literature also reveals that such exemplary practices are not universal and that inadequate educational provision for students at risk remains a continuing problem. Nevertheless, the overall message from the literature is more positive than negative. Dr Richard Sweet, Research Co-ordinator at the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, commented when he first read the draft reports of the reviews: "I find it encouraging that the review clearly indicates (in contrast to the sorts of messages that come from the more fervent advocates of programs such as Headstart) that it is *not* ever too late to make an effective and positive difference to the quality of many young peoples' lives."

Notes

DR MARGARET BATTEN and **MR GRAEME WITHERS** are Senior Research Fellows at the Australian Council for Educational Research in Melbourne. **DR JEAN RUSSELL** is an educational consultant and also a Senior Associate of the Centre for Applied Educational Research at the University of Melbourne.

The material in this article is derived from two reviews of the literature on students at risk, which contain full bibliographic references:

Batten, M. & Russell, J. (1995). *Students at risk: A review of Australian literature 1980-1994.* Camberwell: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Withers, G. & Batten, M. (1995). *Programs for at-risk youth: A review of the American, Canadian and British literature since 1984.* Camberwell: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Students at risk targeted by the Australian National Equity Program for Schools is defined on page 77 of:

Department of Employment, Education and Training. (1994). *Commonwealth programs for schools 1994: Administrative guidelines.* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

The quote from the Education Department of South Australia is from page seven of:

South Australia. Education Department. (1993). *Students at Risk Program in South Australia.* Richmond, South Australia: Education Department of South Australia.

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INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN IN EDUCATION AT RISK THROUGH TRUANCY AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE COMMITTEE NEW ZEALAND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

There is much anecdotal evidence that too many children truant and exhibit behavioural problems that impair their learning and jeopardise their opportunities for success in later life. In order to find out why this occurs, in 1994 the Education and Science Committee of the New Zealand House of Representatives, a seven-member committee, decided to gather evidence, identify and assess successful educational strategies that may assist children in education at risk through truancy and behavioural problems.

The committee received 157 submissions from individuals, schools, government organisations, agencies dealing with children, and colleges of education, and produced a report from which the following executive summary and summary of recommendations is reprinted.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issue of children in education at risk through truancy and behavioural problems is complex and multi-causal. It is wider than education and involves many interdependencies. Parents, children, schools, the community, and several government agencies are involved. For this reason the committee decided to use a cyclical process model of how the education system works in order to focus attention on how, when, where and why children in education become at risk.

The committee believed that any study of particular behaviour at a particular time and setting would not be helpful or illuminating unless the prior and subsequent conditions were also taken into account. What happens in school cannot be divorced from what has happened in the home and will happen in the world of work and adulthood. Behaviour at school is consequential upon prior behaviour in the home and family. It can also be contingent upon the anticipated destination of the school leaver. The three stages in this progression are interrelated and interdependent. They form a continuum where one stage can be understood only by reference to the other stages.

The process model, therefore, highlights the three subsidiary processes of parenting, schooling, and the product of schooling. Each of these processes requires a number of inputs that function together for each process to achieve an optimal result.

The committee noted several important findings about these subsidiary processes. The first is that the parenting process is fundamental to the process of successful schooling. The second is that the earlier necessary interventions are made the more beneficial and permanent the results will be. Another major finding is that the interventions when made need to be comprehensive and co-ordinated. The actions of the agencies must be co-ordinated, controlled, relevant to the situation, fast, effective and efficient if they are to succeed.

A particular concern the committee has is evidence of an increase in dysfunctional, at-risk families, which in turn produce at-risk children who are unable to benefit effectively from the schooling system and who are likely to perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage.

For the schooling system itself to address the needs of children at risk through truancy and behavioural problems, it requires three fundamental components to succeed. All three are equally essential and function like three legs of a tripod. The first is teachers trained fully to recognise and deal with children at risk; the second is support at the classroom level to assist teachers to deal with at-risk children; and the third is in-school and off-school site programmes for children who need interventions to change their behaviour.

The committee considers that with these fundamental components of a policy in place the New Zealand education system will be well placed to produce citizens able to respond successfully to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

■ Parenting skills and support

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- it recognise the utmost importance of early identification and intervention for those families most in need of parenting support, child-rearing assistance and early childhood education;
- it develop, co-ordinate and implement primary prevention and early intervention services, including parent support and parenting education programmes, targeted at the needs of at-risk families and children as a matter of urgency;
- the feasibility of establishing an identification and tracking system for families at risk, using the initial engagement of the family with the health system around the time of birth, be investigated;
- it investigate the training of early childhood staff and primary teachers to identify the behaviours indicating a child at risk and the provision of both teaching methodologies and the external support resources needed to address the problem early.

■ Causative and predictive factors

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- it use the causes of dysfunctional behaviour to identify those families and children most in need and to introduce prevention and early intervention programmes within the home;
- schools recognise that some of the causes of truancy and poor behaviour may reside within the structures, organisation, climate and programmes of schools and that they should engage in periodic self-review;
- the present parent education and support programmes be reviewed with a view to targeting them towards families most in need.

■ Early childhood education: identification of at-risk children and the education of parents

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- the *Parents as First Teachers* (PAFT) programme be reviewed to ascertain whether:
  - it can better target children identified as being at risk;
  - it can focus on broad underlying social needs as well as educational needs;
  - its application can be more intensive and extensive as an intervention to prevent children later becoming at risk of truancy and behavioural problems;
- the *Healthy Start* programme be examined by the Government with a view to incorporating its relevant features into the *PAFT* programme;
- the *Home Instruction Programme for Preschool Youngsters and Healthy Start* programme be considered for appropriate communities.

■ Early childhood education agencies

The committee recommends that the Government note that:

- several agencies, including the Early Childhood Development Unit, Special Education Service and the colleges of education, and all early childhood national organisations, provide professional development resources to assist early childhood staff to identify problem behaviour and to adopt early intervention strategies to rectify that behaviour;
- the adequate funding of early childhood education prevents later truancy and anti-social behaviour.

The committee recommends that the Government should find ways to allow information collected about children by one State agency to be accessed by other State agencies.

■ The purpose and role of schooling

The committee recommends to the Government that the Ministry of Education be charged with clarifying more precisely the role of the school, at each level in the system, indicating what resources are available to carry out that role, indicating what roles are more properly carried out by other agencies or personnel, and disseminating that clarification through incorporation in the national education guidelines.

■ The culture and structure of the school

The committee recommends to the Government that schools be charged with developing a culture and school structure which enable all their students to feel accepted and within which students can express their individuality and grow educationally.

■ The school as a learning environment

The committee recommends to the Government that schools be required to engage in self review and use the Education Review Office audit to ensure that they create a learning environment which:

- recognises and provides for the learning needs of all students;
- creates a love of learning;
- endeavours to remove all barriers to effective learning including those of a behavioural dimension;
- matches individual learning styles with appropriate teaching styles;
- effects desirable behavioural change in at-risk students.

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- professional development programmes by outside agencies be developed to provide knowledge of different learning and teaching styles and that appropriate resources be developed to disseminate that knowledge;
- resources be provided for the in-service and pre-service training of teachers in strategies for identifying and managing behaviour disordered students.

■ The content of schooling

The committee recommends to the Government that schools ensure that the content of schooling and the methods by which it is taught are such that all individuals find relevance and meaning in the programmes offered and see that the outcomes of education are worth pursuing.

■ Pastoral care and guidance

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- it note that the number of students in need of guidance and counselling is increasing;
- there be an increase in the resources provided to schools for the guidance and counselling of students including liaison within the home;
- the Education Review Office be charged with reviewing the extent of pastoral care and guidance in secondary schools (including that which aids effective transition into the workforce) to ascertain points of duplication, areas where the resource is not being used for the purpose appropriated, and whether any resource could be freed for deployment to those at risk whether in the primary or the secondary service;
- primary schools be provided as a matter of urgency with a guidance and counselling service using contracted specialists, guidance and learning teachers, or support teachers, and that resources be made available for this purpose;
- schools and colleges of education be charged with training teachers in the identification and management of children at risk and that resources be provided for this purpose, either by direct funding to the institutions concerned or by way of national contracts;
- schools be required to report on the strategies they have in place and their efficacy in managing students at risk;
- the Minister of Education be charged with devising and providing positive incentives to reward those schools which are successful in keeping their at-risk students in attendance and examine ways to penalise those schools which do not.

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■ Teacher skill training

The committee recommends to the Government that colleges of education, boards of trustees and the Minister of Education:

- provide teachers with pre-service and ongoing in-service training to recognise, understand and assist appropriately children with emotional, psychological and behavioural problems;
- as a matter of urgency provide early childhood and primary teachers with pre-service and in-service training to enable them to recognise behaviour disorders, and to use teaching skills and management strategies to alleviate the inappropriate behaviour.

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- it provide nationwide training for support teachers in primary schools and additional guidance and learning units in targeted areas to deal with primary children's behavioural problems;
- it recruit and train more Maori teachers and teachers of te reo Maori [the Maori language] as a matter of urgency.

■ Consumer input

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- the Minister of Education conduct research into schools that promote a student-centred culture of consultation and participation;
- studies of best practice be undertaken and disseminated of successful alternative education centres that take a consultative approach with children at risk;
- alternative education centres be adequately resourced and staffed;
- more resources be put into pre-service and ongoing in-service teacher training to enable teachers to be able to identify, assess and deal with children potentially at risk;
- the Ministry of Education conduct research into the use of parental educational programmes to inform parents about the education system and the value of education.

■ Behaviour and achievement

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- schools and teachers be provided with assessment models to assist them in distinguishing between the behaviour disordered and temporarily misbehaving children;
- schools be provided with evidence of the need to develop strategies which produce positive results in the dimensions of both behaviour and achievement.

■ Access to education

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- the Education Act 1989 be amended to incorporate a statutory limit on the length of suspension for students;
- the Education Act 1989 be amended to allow more than the current one short-term (three days) suspension per child, per year, before the expulsion procedure is used;
- the Education Act 1989 be amended to give students, as well as parents, a right to be present at board of trustee meetings dealing with the suspension or expulsion of students;
- boards of trustees be required to inform parents/care-givers, of their right to be present at any meeting of a board of trustees convened to deal with the suspension or expulsion of a student;
- the Education Review Office, or another suitable agency, be contracted to monitor and assess the levels of "kiwi suspensions" in schools [that is, when parents are asked to withdraw a child from school rather than having to face possible exclusion by the school's board of trustees];
- legislative and practical steps be taken to prevent the use of "kiwi suspensions";
- more funding and resources be given to the Ministry of Education to follow up children out of the education system and for monitoring suspensions and expulsions.

■ Exemptions

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- the Ministry of Education be required to conduct in-depth screening of parents and the curriculum to be followed before granting certificates of exemption;
- the home-schooling supervision allowance given to parents of home-schoolers be made dependent on a report from either Education Review Office or Ministry of Education officials, that the curriculum being taught is of a standard comparable to that of State schools;
- home-schoolers be required to exhibit to Ministry of Education officials, on a regular basis, that children under their instruction have achieved educational levels comparable to those of State-educated children;
- a portion of the home-schooling supervision allowance be paid to the Education Review Office for conducting assurance audits of home-schooling tuition where the national curriculum is not followed.

■ Enrolment, monitoring and attendance

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- the Ministry of Education monitors all enrolments and implements procedures to ensure all children are enrolled at a school between the ages of six and sixteen;
- it establish and operate a centralised database to collect enrolment, attendance, attrition, exemption, suspension, expulsion and truancy data. It should be managed in a confidential way by one appropriate government agency, with information provided by all agencies and accessible to each agency for appropriate functions only;
- schools should establish enrolment procedures that elicit parent/care-giver consent to the subsequent transfer of student records. Should the obtaining of this consent prove to be unworkable, the committee would recommend that the Government consider amending the Privacy Act 1993 to allow this to occur.

■ Alternative provision

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- there be a review of activity centres to determine their efficacy and the feasibility of their expansion;
- a mechanism be developed for funding on-campus forms of activity centres based on actual and relative needs;
- alternative units, catering primarily for disaffected students, be permitted ready access to Correspondence School tuition and that funding for their supervisors be provided;
- research be undertaken on residential schools to ascertain their efficacy and possible expansion; and that the feasibility of establishing more care and protection residential facilities be investigated;
- the demand for kura kaupapa Maori facilities [teaching through total immersion with the Maori language] should be met by the supply and availability of teachers of te reo Maori and that means be explored for allowing access to kura [schools] by those children at risk in the mainstream, all within a clearly articulated kura kaupapa Maori policy.

■ Funding and resourcing

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- the Targeted Funding For Educational Achievement be researched to ascertain the extent to which the allocation method provides additional resources to those students at educational risk through truancy and behavioural problems;
- a proportion of the Programme Proposals Pool be reserved for funding initiatives which help remedy the problems of truancy and behaviour disorder;
- it provide additional resources for those interventions which research has shown to be effective in remedying truancy and behaviour disorder.

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■ **Interventions that work**

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- it promote to schools an approach to truancy that inculcates, "a positive school atmosphere; having a clearly stated policy, guidelines, and procedures – all of which are communicated to staff, parents and students; good communication between school staff, school and its community, and school and helping agencies; fast communication loops and an immediate response to problems or suspicions; and effective follow-up of absentee students with sufficient time allocated to do the job";
- the Education Review Office publish examples of good practices used by schools that succeed in minimising truancy and behavioural problems;
- it promote the implementation and formal monitoring of schools' policies on bullying and violence and the effectiveness of the intervention strategies used;
- it encourage schools to provide culturally appropriate environments for Maori and Pacific island students.

■ **Co-ordination mechanisms**

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- it adopt the case manager/co-ordinator approach to deal with children with behavioural problems and provides the necessary resources;
- it investigate the feasibility of introducing the "one stop shop" proposal in areas of greatest need;
- it review the truancy protocol and the family group conference method to operate more speedily, more efficiently and incorporate the case manager approach;
- the Police investigate the better identification of truancy as an issue or related issue in their records and statistics data pertaining to young offenders.

■ **Research needed**

The committee recommends that the Government research the effectiveness of current school and kura kaupapa Maori interventions on truancy and behavioural problems.

■ **Employment**

The committee recommends to the Government that:

- schools recommit themselves to the goal of ensuring that the entire school population is provided for individually; that all experience educational success; that learning includes preparation for the world of work and the ability to proceed to further education; and that no student leaves ill-equipped for the world of work;
- schools instil in students a love of learning, learning how to learn, and an ability to continue as life-long learners despite changes in the workplace;
- the role and provision of careers advisers be reviewed by the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office in the context of all pastoral care and guidance and transition resources to determine whether such resources can be better targeted and co-ordinated to address the needs of secondary students and particularly those at risk; and that the role of the Careers Service *vis-a-vis* careers advisers also be examined with the same goal in mind.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The issue of children in education at risk through truancy and behavioural problems is complex and multi-causal. The committee found that it is wider than education and involves many interdependencies. Parents, children, schools, the community and several government agencies are involved. For this reason, the committee used a cyclical process model of how the education system worked in order to focus attention on how, when, where and why children in education become at risk.

The committee found that any study of particular behaviour at a particular point in time in a particular setting will not be helpful or illuminating unless the prior and subsequent conditions are also taken into account. What happens in school cannot be divorced from what has happened in the home and will happen in the world of work and adulthood. Behaviour at school is consequential upon prior behaviour in the home and family. Behaviour at school can also be contingent upon the anticipated destination of the school leaver. The three stages in this progression are interrelated and interdependent. They form a continuum where one stage can only be understood by reference to the other stages.

The process model, therefore, highlighted the three subsidiary processes of parenting, schooling and the product of schooling. Each of these processes requires a number of inputs that function together for each process to achieve an optimal result.

The committee notes several important findings about these subsidiary processes. The first is that the parenting process is fundamental to the process of successful schooling. The second is that the earlier necessary interventions are made the more beneficial and permanent the results will be. Another major finding is that the interventions when made need to be comprehensive and co-ordinated. The actions of the agencies must be co-ordinated, controlled, relevant to the situation, fast, effective and efficient if they are to succeed.

A particular concern the committee has is evidence of an increase in dysfunctional, at-risk families, which in turn produce at-risk children who are unable to benefit effectively from the schooling system and who are likely to perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage.

For the schooling system itself to address the needs of children at risk through truancy and behavioural problems, it requires three fundamental components to succeed. All three are equally essential and function like three legs of a tripod. The first are teachers trained fully to recognise and deal with children at risk; the second is support, at the classroom level, to assist teachers to deal with at-risk children; and the third is in-school and off-school site programmes for children who need interventions to change their behaviour.

The committee considers that with these fundamental components of a policy in place, the New Zealand education system will be well-placed to produce citizens able to respond successfully to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, the committee thanks the many government departments and agencies, public organisations, private organisations, schools, teachers, parents and children who gave their energy and time to writing submissions and giving evidence to the committee.

NOTES

These summaries are from:

Education and Science Committee (1995). *Inquiry into children in education at risk through truancy and behavioural problems.* (Report of the Education and Science Committee, I.2A, First Session, Forty-Fourth Parliament). Wellington: New Zealand House of Representatives.

The members of the committee were Ian Revell (Chairperson), Hon Margaret Austin, David Carter, Hon David Caygill, Tau Henare, Michael Laws, Nick Smith. Eddie Clark acted as adviser to the committee.

The Australian House of Representatives has also commissioned a Standing Committee report which looked at violence in schools:

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training. (1994). *Sticks and stones: Report on violence in Australian Schools.* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

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TACKLING BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

THE FINDINGS FROM INTERVENTIONS

MARK CLEARY, Colenso High School, Napier
PETER K. SMITH, Golosmiths College, University of London
SONIA SHARP, Senior Educational Psychologist, Lincolnshire County Council

There is a growing body of research that shows that schools can confidently tackle bullying. Scandinavian and British studies clearly show that action against this behaviour will significantly reduce its incidence and improve the climate of the school. On a recent Nuffield Foundation Travel Bursary to Britain Mark Cleary, Deputy Principal of Colenso High School, Napier, New Zealand was impressed by both the success of anti-bullying programmes and the hard evidence available to show the effectiveness of these programmes. This article draws on the findings of his visit and of the recent experience of anti-bullying work in the United Kingdom.

According to the British researchers Peter K. Smith and Sonia Sharp bullying can be described most succinctly as the systematic abuse of power – persistent and repeated domination which is intended to intimidate, manipulate, or hurt another person. Bullying behaviour includes many different types of direct and indirect aggressive behaviour, such as name calling, rumour mongering, social exclusion, extortion and physical violence; and also some types of discrimination and harassment – aggressive behaviours directed at a person or group of people because of their identity. But an occasional fight or disagreement between two individuals or groups who have equal status or power would not be classed as bullying behaviour.

In the most extensive survey to date of bullying in schools in the United Kingdom, 27 percent of primary age pupils and ten percent of secondary aged pupils reported that they had been bullied more than once or twice during that school term. Within this group of pupils were a smaller group who were persistently and regularly bullied. Ten percent of primary pupils and four percent of secondary pupils said they were bullied at least once a week throughout the term. In a more recent survey of five secondary schools, four percent of pupils reported that they had been persistently bullied for more than one year. Some schools had a lot more bullying than others. In most schools, there were individual classes which had very high levels of bullying. In these classes bullying had become a way of managing social relationships. Another important finding has been that many pupils who are bullied at school tell no-one about it (and those that do, are more likely to tell a parent or friend than a teacher). This points to the importance of breaking the "culture of silence" which surrounds bullying in so many schools.

While there is no firm evidence of the size of the problem in New Zealand, anonymous student questionnaires used in informal studies suggest the problem is of a similar scale. Similar rates of bullying have emerged from surveys in countries as diverse as Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Australia, and Japan. Rates appear to be slightly lower in Scotland, and in the Scandinavian countries.

DOES BULLYING MATTER?

The research available from the extensive Sheffield project and the work of Strathclyde Education Authority suggest that schools should be concerned about bullying. Most children do not like to be bullied; persistent experiences of being bullied are related to lower self-esteem, and in extreme cases can lead to suicide. Research evidence now suggests that bullying behaviour can negatively affect children's achievement in school. In a survey of 755 secondary pupils, a third of pupils who had been bullied reported that their concentration in school had suffered as a result of the worry and anxiety they had experienced. Twenty percent of pupils reported that they truanted to avoid their tormentors. Some children experienced sleep difficulties and other stress related symptoms. It is not only the more extreme forms of bullying which affect pupil well-being. Both boys and girls found having nasty rumours spread about them the most stressful form of bullying behaviour.

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO?

While all teachers have recognised school bullying, a lack of understanding, combined with inappropriate school and classroom management styles, makes it difficult for successful intervention. Consequently, for many years bullying was given little attention, and there were few resources to help teachers. This has now changed. In Norway, school interventions have been introduced successfully. Resources have accumulated in the United Kingdom, including the pack for schools, *Don't Suffer in Silence*, from the Sheffield Anti-Bullying Project, funded by the British Department for Education. While these resources have been available in Australia and New Zealand, there have been no official communications to New Zealand schools alerting schools to successful strategies. The only resource produced has been the 1992 New Zealand Police programme *Kia Kaha*.

A WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY: A KEY FACTOR

The evidence from Norway and Britain is clear: a thorough and extensive approach which involves the whole school community in applying consistent strategies is most likely to be effective. One way of achieving this level of involvement and consistency in practice is through establishing a whole school anti-bullying approach. The approach needs to incorporate a policy that will guide day to day relationships and management of behaviour throughout the school. By establishing the policy, the school can ensure that both preventative measures and effective responses are implemented.

A whole school-anti bullying approach needs to be central to the school's Charter and be consistent with the stated aims of the school. The National Administration Guidelines (part of every school charter in New Zealand) provide a clear base statement. For instance, Guideline 5 states:

> Each Board of Trustees is also required to: Provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students....

Through implementation of the anti-bullying approach, everyone within the school should be clear about how bullying behaviour is defined and how it can be prevented and responded to.

In the British Sheffield Project 23 schools were encouraged to establish anti-bullying policies. Important stages of this were:

1. AWARENESS RAISING. To begin with, schools must take the problem seriously and put bullying "on the agenda". Useful here are surveys of bullying, and curriculum activities such as watching and discussing a video or play about bullying.
2. CONSULTATION. To be effective, the policy should belong to the whole school community – including pupils, teachers, lunchtime supervisors, parents, governors. In the Sheffield Project, those schools which had involved most of their staff (including non-teaching staff) in the process of policy development had the largest reductions in levels of bullying.

   Consultation about the actual content of the policy was widespread and thorough. Schools which consulted with pupils as well as staff about policy content were more successful in encouraging pupils to tell a teacher when they were bullied and increased confidence amongst pupils that "this school does take action against bullying".
3. CONTENT. Each school will develop a policy which reflects its own needs. Within the Sheffield anti-bullying project schools included: the aims and objectives of the school in relation to bullying; a clear definition of which behaviours are considered to be bullying within the school (this may differ from school to school); a description of how bullying would be prevented; procedures for staff, pupils, parents, and governors who become aware of a bullying situation; procedures for bullying situations which persist even after initial intervention by the school.
4. COMMUNICATION. The policy must be communicated effectively, via assemblies, noticeboards, newsletters, curriculum activities.
5. IMPLEMENTATION. The policy must be seen to be implemented if pupils are to have confidence in it.
6. EVALUATION. Records should be kept of actions taken, and rates of bullying monitored, so that the policy can be evaluated, revised, and periodically renewed with new pupils, staff, and parents.

OTHER INTERVENTIONS

What else can the school do to strengthen the effectiveness of the policy? The lessons of the Sheffield Project were that the more action

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schools took, the greater the reductions in bullying obtained. Specifically, schools can tackle bullying through the curriculum; through enhancing the quality of playtimes and lunchbreaks; and through providing ways in which staff, or other pupils, can interact with pupils likely to be involved in bullying situations. Programmes such as peer-support and peer-mediation can all be integrated into a school-wide approach.

THE CURRICULUM

Through curriculum activities, including video, drama, and literature, as well as discussion and role-play, it is possible to explore a wide range of issues about the problem of bullying behaviour. These include practical issues such as: What is bullying? What motivates people to bully? How does bullying affect others? How does it feel to bully/be bullied? What can you do about bullying? What should the school do?

The finding of the Sheffield Project was that short term projects or lessons on bullying and related issues have a limited effect on pupil behaviour. Immediately after, pupils may be more considerate of each other; but if this is the only anti-bullying strategy then some weeks later, bullying behaviour will have resumed its normal pattern. The most effective use of curriculum activities appears to be in the awareness-raising stage of policy development (see above), and when the policy is being renewed, or introduced to new groups of pupils.

THE PLAYGROUND

While in general New Zealand and Australian playground environments are significantly more spacious and pleasant than their British counterparts, for bullied pupils lunch and breaktimes can be vulnerable times. Bullying is more likely to occur when pupils are over-crowded or bored. The structure and design of the playground can increase or reduce the possibility of bullying behaviour. Playgrounds which offer a diverse range of areas and activities can provide pupils with a variety of activities to suit their needs. (See **Notes**).

STAFF BEHAVIOUR

Challenging pupil bullying behaviour will essentially force schools to also focus on staff behaviour. Staff should be encouraged to use constructive methods of behaviour management and classroom control. It is possible for teachers and other staff to be directive and firm without being aggressive and cruel. Staff also need to consider how they manage relationships with colleagues and parents. If pupils see and hear bullying behaviour used by adults they may copy it. Some schools have begun by developing a staff code of conduct before beginning to work with pupils on the issue of bullying. It is significant that the successful Strathclyde Education's *Bullyproofing Your School* initiative followed a substantial teacher professional development programme aimed at promoting positive behaviours.

All staff must take bullying seriously, even if they are not sure what exactly has happened and who was involved. This does not mean that they should necessarily react to the bullying situation but that they should listen carefully to what each pupil has to say. Any potential bullying situation which is ignored can be interpreted as acceptance by pupils. Listening to pupils who complain of being bullied and following these complaints up demonstrates that it is worth pupils reporting bullying behaviour. Encouraging pupils to report bullying and responding effectively reduces the duration of the bullying and the likelihood of it re-occurring.

Usually in a situation where bullying is reported the version of events will differ from one pupil to another. It may be difficult for staff to know who is telling the truth. Often, bullying is carried out by a gang, therefore you may have only one or two pupils giving one account and several giving another. Just because more than one pupil provides the same detail does not mean that the larger group will be telling the truth. There will rarely be neutral witnesses to verify accounts. If at all possible, try a problem-solving approach as a first step. This requires the teacher to focus on finding a solution rather than discovering the sequence of events leading to the problem.

PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACHES

Two particular problem-solving techniques which are well developed are the *Pikas Method of Shared Concern* and the *No Blame* approach (see **Notes**). In the Pikas method, developed in Sweden, a teacher or counsellor works with a gang of children who are bullying a victim. Each member of the gang, starting with the leader, is interviewed one by one. They are asked what they know of the bullying in a non-threatening way, helped to acknowledge the suffering of the victim, and then asked what they can do to help the situation. The victim is also interviewed and if it is thought necessary, helped to change his or her behaviour. Follow-up meetings in successive weeks work towards a joint meeting with all the pupils concerned.

In the *No Blame* approach, the teacher asks the bullied child to produce a picture, story, or poem illustrating their feelings at being bullied. The teacher shares this in a group meeting with classmates including those thought to be involved in the bullying, and asks each child for a constructive suggestion. Again, a follow-up can be made the next week.

For many pupils this kind of approach is sufficient to deter future bullying. For some, however, the bullying will continue. Parents should always be involved at this point. Sanctions may be required. If damage to personal possessions or injury has occurred, parents may wish to press charges against the bullying pupils.

PUPIL BEHAVIOUR

Peers can provide a support network for bullied pupils at lunchtime in both primary and secondary schools. This can be achieved by setting up "activity groups" or by training pupils as mediators, buddies or counsellors. An activity group or club is run by pupils for pupils and allows opportunities for structured games which anyone can join in. For those pupils who feel left out or who find it difficult to build relationships with others, activity groups provide a safe and easy way of becoming involved with other pupils. Activity groups can be indoor or outdoor and can involve active, physical games, board games, art, or computer activities.

Training pupils in mediation or counselling skills has been common in schools in Canada for some time. Schools in the United Kingdom are beginning to follow suit. As mediators, pupils are trained to intervene when there is conflict between peers. The pupils are given the option of sorting the problem out with the mediator or going to see a member of staff. The mediator then works with the pupils through a series of problem solving steps. These include: identifying what each person wants; identifying what each person needs; exploring possible ways of meeting both parties needs; and agreeing to a solution. As counsellors, pupils are trained in active listening skills and ways of helping others to identify their own solutions. Counselling teams are then "on duty" at lunchtimes and pupils who are worried, upset, or angry can make an appointment with a member or the team.

Counselling and mediation services do not replace staff support for bullied pupils but they do allow pupils to contribute positively to the school community and they do recognise that some pupils will prefer peer support to adult support. Schools considering setting up a peer counselling service will need to address ethical issues concerning confidentiality and limits of pupils responsibility as well as provision of support and supervision for counsellors.

SUPPORTING BULLIED CHILDREN

Bullied pupils can very quickly blame themselves for being bullied. They may have already begun to believe that

they deserve some of the nasty things which have happened to them. A first step will be to help the bullied pupil to feel better about themselves. It can be very easy for teachers to take over from the bullied pupil and not leave them the opportunity to respond to the bullying behaviour themselves. This may reinforce the helplessness and powerlessness the bullied pupil might be feeling. Teachers can support the bullied pupil by working with the other pupils but still support the bullied pupils in contributing to the solution. The teacher can rehearse with the bullied pupil a range of effective strategies for handling bullying situations.

Some of the most effective strategies for standing up to bullying come from work on assertiveness. By teaching pupils to be assertive, we teach them to stand up for their own rights without violating the rights of others. Assertiveness work teaches us that we are equal, rather than inferior or superior, to our peers. It provides a set of "scripts" which can be used in situations where we are not being listened to, where someone is trying to manipulate, threaten or hurt us; for example: "I don't like it when you call me names. I want you to stop." or "I don't lend my bike." Assertiveness training attends to how you speak as well as what you say; for example helping a victim to stand and speak with confidence, in a relaxed manner, with shoulders back, arms by their side, maintaining eye contact, and keeping their voice low and controlled.

In addition pupils can be encouraged to leave the situation at the earliest possible moment, and to seek support and tell an adult as necessary. Assertiveness training is helpful for many pupils. However, they do not always work for every child. The pupil him or herself will have to make a decision about what is the best course of action in any situation. The pupil should always attend to their own personal safety first.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT TO ACHIEVE?

The effects of these kinds of approaches varies from school to school and will reflect the amount of effort put in. The more thoroughly and extensively these kinds of interventions are implemented, the more likely you are to affect the social fabric of the school. In the Sheffield Project, the rate at which this *was* achieved and the way in which these changes *were* identified varied between primary and secondary.

Taking the findings of the Sheffield project as a guide, in primary schools you should see a reduction in the number of pupils who are being bullied. This reduction may be quite large and may occur soon after you begin to implement your whole school anti-bullying policy. In secondary schools changes to levels of reported bullying are more likely to be small and perhaps occur only after one or two years of implementing the policy. Secondary schools can expect to achieve a more rapid increase in the number of pupils who tell a teacher when they are being bullied. If this leads to effective action by the school then there should be a reduction in the duration of the bullying behaviour. More pupils should be willing to help a peer who is being bullied and less likely to join in bullying others themselves.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHETHER WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN TACKLING BULLYING?

The most efficient way of identifying changes in levels of bullying is to carry out an anonymous survey. You should do this before you begin to work on bullying and then repeat it annually or bi-annually once you have begun to implement your policy. You can buy survey materials or you can design your own. By comparing your whole school results annually you will identify progress made and areas for further development. By analysing results class by class you will be able to note classes where bullying is a particular problem and respond appropriately.

SUMMARY

Schools can do many things to reduce levels of bullying. The most effective interventions involve staff and pupils in tackling the problem together. A whole school anti-bullying policy provides a framework for doing this and it is the process of developing and implementing this which enables change to occur. The policy can be backed up with curriculum activities, playground work, and procedures for helping pupils involved in bullying behaviour. These have been shown to be effective, and resources now exist to help schools implement them.

NOTES

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The most extensive survey to date of bullying in the United Kingdom is:

Whitney, I., & Smith, P.K. (1993). A survey of the nature and extent of bully/victim problems in junior/middle and secondary schools. *Educational Research, 35*, 3-25.

Another recent survey is:

Sharp, S. (1995). How much does bullying hurt? The effects of bullying on the personal well being and educational progress of secondary aged pupils. *Educational and Child Psychology, 12* (2), 81-88.

That rates of bullying in Scotland and the Scandinavian countries are slightly lower than other countries is noted in:

Whitney and Smith (1993) see above.

That a third of pupils bullied reported their concentration in school had suffered is reported by:

Sharp (1995) see above.

Successful school interventions in Norway are described in:

Olweus, D. (1994). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Resources for schools in the United Kingdom are described in the following:

Skinner, A. (1992). *Bullying: An annotated bibliography of literature and resources.* Leicester: Youth Work Press.

HMSO. (1994). *Don't suffer in silence.* Author.

Results of the Sheffield Anti-Bullying Project are described in detail in:

Sharp, S., & Smith, P.K. (1994). *Tackling bullying in your school: A practical handbook for teachers.* London: Routledge.

Smith, P.K., & Sharp, S. (Eds.) (1994). *School bullying: Insights and perspectives.* London: Routledge.

The evidence from Norway and Britain that a thorough and extensive approach involving the whole school community is reported by:

Olweus (1993) see above.

Sharp and Smith (1994) see above.

Ways of enhancing playgrounds are described in:

O'Rourke, M. (1987). In the playground. *set: Research Information for Teachers, 2* (15).

Blatchford, P., & Sharp, S. (Eds.) (1994). *Breaktime and the school: Understanding and changing playground behaviour.* London: Routledge.

Two problem-solving techniques are:

Maines, B., & Robinson, G. (1992). *Michael's story: The no blame approach.* Bristol: Lame Duck Publishing.

Pikas, A. (1989). The common concern method for the treatment of mobbing. In E. Roland, & E. Munthe (Eds.), *Bullying: An international perspective.* London: David Fulton.

Training in mediation and counselling skills for British pupils is documented in:

Cowie, H., & Sharp, S. (1995). *Peer counselling in schools.* London: David Fulton.

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TRUANCY IN ADOLESCENCE

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INTRODUCTION

Recently there have been growing concerns about rising rates of truancy and disruptive behaviours in New Zealand secondary school pupils. These concerns have largely been articulated by secondary school teachers and their representatives who have suggested that rates of truancy and antisocial behaviours in secondary school pupils are rising. In response to these concerns the New Zealand government set up in 1994 a select committee to examine truancy and associated problems in New Zealand school pupils.

While there have been growing claims of rising truancy and related problems in secondary school students, official statistics documenting the extent of truancy are limited or absent. Although there have been a number of previous studies of truancy or absenteeism in both primary and secondary school pupils it is possible that these studies may now be out of date as a guide to current levels of truancy in New Zealand.

In this paper we report on a longitudinal study of the prevalence and development of self reported and parentally reported truancy in a birth cohort of Christchurch born children studied over the period from 12 to 16 years of age. The aims of this paper were to examine three general issues which have bearing on contemporary debates about the prevalence, correlates and related features of truancy in New Zealand secondary school students. These issues are:

- **The development and characteristics of truancy**

The availability of longitudinal data made it possible to construct accounts of the rates of truancy over the period of the young person's secondary school career (up to the age of 16 years) to examine the extent to which rates of truancy vary with chronological age. In particular, previous research suggests that it is likely that rates of truancy will show a marked increase around the age of 14 to 16 years, coinciding with the well documented increase in other forms of norm violating or antisocial behaviours that occur at around this age. However, while many analyses have contrasted the characteristics of truants with those of non-truants, it is clear that adolescents who truant do not form a single homogeneous population showing a common behaviour. There is likely to be a spectrum of truanting behaviour ranging from infrequent or occasional truancy to severe or recurrent truancy. If this is the case, it would have an impact on the assessment of the extent to which truancy poses problems for school management and for the individual pupil. One of the aims of this paper will be to use longitudinally collected data to illustrate the spectrum of truanting within members of this birth cohort and, in particular, to identify the fraction of the secondary school population who exhibit severe, recurrent truancy.

Is the tendency to truant an expression of normal adolescent behaviour, or a sign there may be other adjustment problems? This study of over 1000 students provides a factual basis from which to enter the debate of truancy and links with other behaviour.

- **The individual and family characteristics of truants**

As a number of authors have pointed out, the origins of truancy are complex and involve influences from the family, the individual, and the general social context of the school as a social institution. The data collected during the present research made it possible to examine the extent to which individual and family factors make contributions to risks of truancy in secondary school pupils. A further aim of the present study was to present data on the social background, family characteristics, and individual features of truants to examine the extent to which family background, early behavioural adjustment, and levels of academic achievement contribute to risks of truancy in adolescence.

- **The associations of truancy with other aspects of adolescent adjustment**

While much research into truancy has focused upon truancy in terms of its associations with educational attainment or effects on school management, it is clear that truancy frequently reflects more general aspects of adolescent adjustment. Specifically, the research evidence tends to suggest that young people who truant, and particularly those prone to severe or recurrent truancy, often exhibit other problems of personal adjustment including juvenile delinquency, substance use and other antisocial or norm violating behaviours. These findings suggest that in a number of teenagers truancy (and particularly severe truancy) may be symptomatic of more generalised tendencies to antisocial behaviours or problems of adjustment.

The potential linkages between truancy and other aspects of behavioural adjustment have perhaps been best summarised by problem behaviour theory. This theory proposes that many aspects of adolescent adjustment tend to be correlated or comorbid and reflect the presence of a generalised tendency to antisocial or norm violating behaviours. Clearly, the extent to which truancy is associated with other problems of adolescence is important in appraising truancy statistics and specifically, if truancy frequently emerges as being associated with other problems of adjustment, it is clear that an emphasis on truancy without considering other aspects of adolescent adjustment may be misleading. Against this background a further aim of this analysis was to document the extent to which secondary school students who truanted exhibit other problems of adjustment including juvenile offending, substance use or abuse behaviours and mental health problems.

METHOD

The data reported here were collected during the course of the Christchurch Health and Development Study, a longitudinal study of a birth cohort of 1265 children born in the Christchurch urban region during mid 1977. These children have been studied at birth, four months, one year, and annual intervals to the age of 16 years. The data analysed in this report included:

- measures of truancy (11-16 year-olds)
- measures of sociodemographic background
- family functioning
- measures of cognitive ability and academic achievement
- conduct disorder
- measures of adolescent adjustment (14-16 year-olds), including:
  - substance use behaviours
  - measures of disruptive or antisocial behaviours
  - measures of depression, suicidal behaviour and low self-esteem.

The analyses reported in this paper are based on a sample of 935 children who had data on truancy at the age of 16 years. This sample represented 74 percent of the original cohort and 84 percent of all cohort members still alive and resident in New Zealand at the age of 16 years. To examine the representativeness of this sample comparisons were made of the sociodemographic characteristics of the remaining 935 children with the original cohort of 1265 children. This showed that the sample was representative in terms of maternal age, family socioeconomic status, family size, birth status (one parent/two parent family) and gender.

The single strongest predictor of truancy was a global measure of family functioning.

RESULTS

THE EXTENT OF TRUANCY (11-16 YEAR-OLDS)

Table 1 provides an account of the development of truancy during the period from 11 to 16 years. It shows the percentage of children classified as truants at each age and gives life table estimates of the probability that a teenager would have truanted on at least one occasion by a given age. These statistics lead to two general conclusions about the development and prevalence of truancy in this cohort.

First, there was evidence of an almost exponential increase in annual rates of truancy during the period from 11 to 16 years. At age 12 years, the annual rate of truancy was low (3.0 percent) while by age 16 years this rate had risen tenfold to 30.2 percent. Secondly, the life table estimates show that truancy at some stage of the secondary school career was common with an estimated 39.8 percent of the sample having truanted on at least one occasion during the period from 11-16 years. Rates of truancy were not significantly different (p>.90) for males and females: 39.2 percent of males had truanted by the age of 16 years compared with 40.4 percent of females.

While the results in Table 1 show the development of truancy they do not provide an account of the extent of truanting. This is given in Table 2 which shows very clearly that there was a spectrum of truanting behaviours which ranged from none to severe and also suggests the presence of a relatively small minority of teenagers (7.1 percent) who showed severe and recurrent truancy and who had truanted on at least 31 occasions (median = 80) during the period from 14 to 16 years.

THE SOCIAL, FAMILY AND INDIVIDUAL PREDICTORS OF ADOLESCENT TRUANCY

To examine the extent to which variations in truanting behaviours were related to family social background, family functioning, early behavioural adjustment, academic achievement, and cognitive ability during middle childhood a multiple regression model was fitted to the data. In this model the dependent variable was the frequency of truancy between the ages of 14 to 16 years and the predictors of this outcome were measures of family social background, family functioning, behavioural adjustment at age eight and cognitive test scores observed up to the age of 13 years. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3, and may be interpreted as follows:

- Two variables emerged as significant predictors of the extent of truancy in adolescence:

  the extent to which the child showed early conduct problems (b = .12; p<.005) and the family functioning index ((b = .27; p<.0001). These results imply that rates of truancy in adolescence were elevated amongst children who showed early conduct problems and children from families in which there was evidence of family dysfunction, family conflict or compromised parenting.

Table 1: Annual rates of truancy (11-16 year-olds) and probabilities of truancy by a given age

Age Interval	*Annual Rate (percent)*	*Probability (percent) of Truancy by Age "i"*
11-12 years	3.0	3.0
12-13 years	5.2	6.9
13-14 years	11.3	13.5
14-15 years	22.9	27.2
15-16 years	30.2	39.8

Table 2: Frequency of truancy (14-16 year-olds)

Number of Episodes (14-16 year-olds)	*Median Number of Episodes*	*Percent of Sample*
0	0	62.9
1-5	2	20.0
6-30	12	10.1
31+	80	7.1
	N = 935	

Table 3: Multiple regression analyses of frequency of truancy (14-16 year-olds) and sociodemographic factors, family functioning, early behaviour and cognitive measures (8-13 year-olds)

Factor	*Bivariate Correlation*[1]	*Standardised Regression Coefficient*	*p*
Sociodemographic Background			
Family socioeconomic status	.21	-.01	>.85
Maternal age	-.19	-.04	>.30
Maternal education	-.16	-.02	>.50
Child ethnicity	.14	.02	>.50
Family Functioning			
Family functioning index	.35	.27	<.0001
Early Behaviour			
Conduct problems (8 years)	.22	.12	<.005
Cognitive Measures[2]			
IQ (8 years)	-.13	.03	>.40
Reading comprehension (10 years)	-.12	.03	>.40
Mathematical reasoning (11 years)	-.13	.03	>.45
Reading comprehension (12 years)	-.10	.05	>.15
Scholastic ability (13 years)	-.16	.01	>.80
MULTIPLE CORRELATION		.38	<.0001

1 *All bivariate correlations are significantly different (p<.01) from zero.*
2 *As the cognitive measures were highly correlated these measures were entered into the analysis one at a time rather than simultaneously to avoid problems of multicollinearity in the model.*

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- Measures of family sociodemographic background, including socioeconomic status, maternal age, maternal education and ethnicity were significantly ($p<.01$) correlated with truancy in adolescence but were not predictors of truancy. The reason for this was that the family social background measures were associated with the family functioning index which in turn was related to risks of truancy.
- Measures of academic achievement during middle childhood were also correlated with truancy but these measures were not predictors of truancy. The reasons for this were that academic achievement measures were correlated with both family functioning and early behaviours which in turn were related to truancy.

THE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN TRUANCY AND OTHER ASPECTS OF ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT

Table 4 shows the sample classified into four groups on the basis of the frequency of truancy during the period from 14 to 16 years. These groups were: teenagers for whom truancy was not reported, teenagers who reported infrequent truancy (less than six occasions); teenagers who showed moderate tendencies to truancy (reported as truanting on 6-30 occasions) and teenagers who showed severe, recurrent truancy (more than 30 occasions). For each group the Table reports the percentage who exhibited various problems of adolescent adjustment including substance use, juvenile offending and mental health problems.

DISCUSSION

THE DEVELOPMENT AND PREVALENCE OF TRUANCY

In agreement with previous research this study suggested clear age related differences in rates of truancy during the period from 12 to 16 years. Truancy amongst 12 year-olds was uncommon (3.0 percent) but this behaviour showed an almost exponential growth over the course of the secondary school years with the result that rates of truancy in 16 year-olds were ten times greater than those in 12 year-olds. This clear tendency for rates of truancy to increase rapidly during adolescence parallels more general trends which have shown similar increases in a range of behaviours including juvenile offending, substance use behaviours and mental health problems in adolescence.

Truancy in this cohort was common and life table estimates suggested that by the age of 16 years nearly 40 percent of this cohort had truanted on at least one occasion. However, it was clear that there was considerable variability in the severity of truancy. For many teenagers truancy was occasional or infrequent but nonetheless the study suggested the presence of a relatively small minority of teenagers (7.1 percent) who showed frequent and recurrent truancy in adolescence. These results clearly suggest that teenagers who truant are unlikely to be a single homogeneous group showing a common problem.

THE PREDICTORS OF TRUANCY

An advantage of the longitudinal design used in this study was that it was possible to examine the extent to which prospectively collected measures of family circumstances, behavioural adjustment and academic achievement, observed prior to adolescence, were predictive of later truancy. This analysis showed that the single strongest predictor of truancy was a global measure of family functioning and, in general, the results suggest that children reared in disadvantaged, dysfunctional or conflictful home environments were at increased risks of later truancy. This result parallels findings from other studies of this cohort which have suggested that the general level and adequacy of family functioning acts as an important determinant of adolescent adjustment including multiple problem behaviours in adolescence and teenage suicide attempts.

The child's behavioural adjustment at age eight years was also prognostic of later truancy suggesting that independently of family factors the characteristics of the child in terms of his/her predispositions to antisocial or norm violating behaviours also contributed to truancy risks.

While truancy has often been linked to general measures of family sociodemographic background including family socioeconomic status, parental education, or ethnicity, these factors were not predictive of adolescent truancy in this cohort. Family sociodemographic factors were correlated with truancy but the regression analysis suggested that this arose largely because family sociodemographic background was related to family functioning which in turn was a determinant of later truancy. These results may suggest that the linkages between sociodemographic characteristics and truancy largely arose because of the linkages between general family social background and variations in levels of family functioning.

Teenagers who truant are unlikely to be a single homogeneous group showing a common problem.

Truancy has been linked to academic achievement and it could be suggested that these linkages arise because academic failure encourages truancy in children. However, the child's cognitive ability and academic achievement during middle childhood and early adolescence was unrelated to later truancy when due allowance was made for early behavioural adjustment and family functioning. While measures of academic achievement were moderately correlated with later truancy these correlations arose largely because levels of academic achievement were related to family functioning and early adjustment with these factors, in turn, being prognostic of truancy. These results suggest that the associations between school achievement and later truancy were likely to be non-causal and to have arisen because the family and individual factors that were associated with truancy were also associated with academic under achievement.

Table 4: Frequency of truancy (14-16 year-olds) related to rates (percent) of adolescent problem behaviours (14-16 year-olds)

	Frequency of Truancy (14-16 year-olds) (Number of Episodes)				Test of Linear Trend
	None	1-5	6-30	31+	c^2
% Daily tobacco use	4.6	21.9	33.0	68.2	<.0001
% Alcohol abuse	5.1	18.2	29.8	39.4	<.0001
% Cannabis use	8.7	32.1	38.3	75.8	<.0001
% Conduct/Oppositional disorder	6.5	17.1	41.5	60.6	<.0001
% Self report offending (>5 offences)	10.7	36.9	55.3	77.3	<.0001
% Police contact	3.6	11.9	14.9	35.7	<.0001
% Mood disorders	8.5	16.6	28.7	27.7	<.0001
% Suicidal ideation/behaviour	10.0	17.7	24.5	33.3	<.0001
% Low self-esteem	7.1	13.9	16.0	25.8	<.0001
N	588	187	94	66	

THE BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TEENAGERS WHO TRUANT

A further finding of the study was evidence of a close linkage between the severity of truancy and risks of other forms of adolescent difficulties. Specifically, the analysis suggested that as truancy increased in severity there were parallel increases in risks of juvenile offending, substance use behaviours, and mental health problems with teenagers who showed severe and recurrent truancy having risks of these outcomes that were 3.3 to 14.8 times higher than teenagers who did not truant. Further, there was clear evidence to suggest a gradient of risk in which rates of adolescent difficulties varied with the severity of truancy.

These results have bearing on debates about the extent to which truancy is a normal adolescent behaviour. First, it is clear that since nearly 40 percent of teenagers in this cohort had truanted at some time in their secondary school career it would be misleading to regard all truancy in adolescence as being pathological. At the same time it is clear that, as truancy becomes increasingly more severe and recurrent, risks that young people will show other problems increase markedly.

These conclusions suggest that responses to truancy in secondary school pupils should vary with both the severity of truancy and the behavioural context within which truancy occurs. The results above suggest that for the majority of cases in which truancy is mild and occasional this behaviour may be seen as being non-pathological and part of adolescent developmental processes. Under these circumstances truancy should be adequately addressed by normal school record keeping and discipline practices. Nonetheless, as truancy becomes increasingly severe the likelihood that the young person will show other adjustment problems increases markedly. The young people in this study who showed severe truancy frequently had other problems of adjustment that required attention. This suggests that severe truancy in adolescence is not simply a school management problem but rather, is frequently symptomatic of young people with multiple difficulties who may be in need of guidance, assistance and support to address a range of problems. These conclusions clearly suggest the need for the school management of adolescents exhibiting severe truancy to be linked with the provision of other services to address the range of problems that are frequently exhibited by adolescents who show severe and recurrent truancy.

NOTES

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MICHAEL T. LYNSKY and **L. JOHN HORWOOD** are Research Fellows at the Christchurch School of Medicine.

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Fergusson, D.M., Lynskey, M.T., & Horwood, L.J. (1995). Truancy in adolescence. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 30* (1), 25-37.

Details of the Christchurch Health and Development Study, which formed the basis of this research, can be found in:

Fergusson, D.M., Horwood, L.J., Shannon, F.T., & Lawton, J.M. (1989). The Christchurch Child Development Study: A review of epidemiological findings. *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology, 3*, 302-325.

The New Zealand select committee report on truancy was published as:

Education and Science Committee (1995). *Inquiry into children in education at risk through truancy and behavioural problems.* (Report of the Education and Science Committee, I.2A, First Session, Forty-Fourth Parliament). Wellington: New Zealand House of Representatives.

Previous studies of truancy and absenteeims include:

Berwick-Emms, P. (1987). Absent and not excused: Non-attendance in a social perspective. *set: Research Information for Teachers, 1* (12).

Fergusson, D.M., Horwood, L.J., & Shannon, F.T. (1986). Absenteeism amongst primary school children. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 21*, 3-12.

MacDonald, I. (1991). Persistent absenteeism in christchurch secondary schools. *Research Report No. 91-1.* Christchurch: University of Canterbury.

Syme, D. (1981). A study of truancy in secondary pupils. *PPTA Journal*, Term 3.

Taylor, A.J., Sturrock, F.M., & White, J.E. (1982). *Absence from school: A national survey of state primary and secondary schools in New Zealand.* Wellington: Department of Education.

That rates of truancy show a marked increase around the age of 14 and 16 years is reported by:

Galloway, D. (1985). *Schools and persistent absentees.* Oxford: Pergamon.

Family influences on truancy are reported in:

Farrington, D. (1980). Truancy, delinquency, the home, and the school. In L. Hersov & I. Berg (Eds.), *Out of school: Modern perspectives in truancy and school refusal* (pp.49-64). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Galloway, D. (1985), see above.

Individual influences on truancy are reported in:

Berg, I. (1985). The management of truancy. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 26*, 325-331.

Farrington, D. (1980), see above.

Galloway, D. (1983). Truants and other absentees. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 24*, 607-611.

Influences of the social context of the school on truancy are reported in:

Brown, D. (1983). Truants, families and schools: A critique of the literature on truancy. *Educational Review, 35*, 225-235.

Carlen, P., Gleeson, D., & Wardhaugh, J. (1992). *Truancy: The politics of compulsory schooling.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Galloway, D. (1985), see above.

Paterson, F.M.S. (1989). *Out of place: Public policy and the emergence of truancy.* London: Falmer Press.

That young people who truant often exhibit other problems of personal adjustment is reported in:

Farrington, D. (1980), see above.

Pritchard, C., Cotton, A., & Cox, M. (1992). Truancy and illegal drug use, and knowledge of HIV infection in 932 14-16-year-old adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence, 15*, 1-17.

Problem behaviour theory is reported in:

Jessor, R., & Jessor, S.L. (1977). *Problem behavior and psychosocial development: A longitudinal study of youth.* New York: Academic Press.

Donovan, J.E., & Jessor, R. (1985). Structure of problem behavior in adolescence and young adulthood. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 53*, 890-904.

That the rates of truancy as well as juvenile offending, substance use behaviours, and mental health problems have a tendency to increase during adolescence is referenced to:

Loeber, R. (1990). Development and risk factors of juvenile antisocial behavior and delinquency. *Clinical Psychology Review, 10*, 1-41.

Moffitt, T.E. (1993), see above.

Rutter, M., Izard, C.E., & Read, P.B. (1986). *Depression in young people: Developmental and clinical perspectives.* New York: Guilford.

Findings from other studies of this cohort which looked at family functioning as a determinant are:

Fergusson, D.M., Horwood, L.J., & Lynskey, M.T. (1994). The childhoods of multiple problem adolescents: A 15 year longitudinal study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 35*, 1123-140.

Fergusson, D.M., & Lynsky, M.T. (In press). Childhood circumstances, adolescent adjustment and suicide attempts in a New Zealand birth cohort. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.*

That truancy can be linked to family sociodemographic background has been reported by:

Farrington, D. (1980), see above.

Galloway, D. (1982). A study of persistent absentees and their families. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 52*, 317-330.

Galloway, D. (1985), see above.

That academic failure encourages truancy has been argued by:

Galloway, D. (1985), see above.

Sommer, B. (1985). What's different about truants? A comparison study of eighth-graders? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 14*, 411-422.

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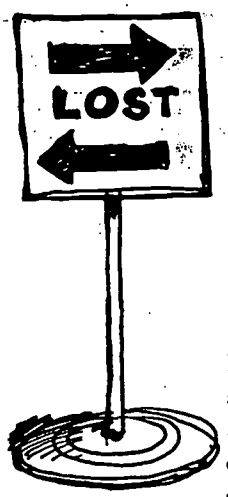


INTRODUCTION

An earlier study compared the short-term effectiveness of two different kinds of child protection programs offered in South Australian state primary schools (*Protective Behaviours*) and New Zealand primary schools (*Keeping Ourselves Safe*) when used with children aged 5-8 years. The combined study involved 378 children drawn from 15 schools. The schools were chosen to represent the socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic mix of South Australian and New Zealand societies. To ensure that we had a spread of abilities, teachers were asked to select boys and girls from each age group, of average, above average and below average levels.

Interview schedules were designed on "problem-solving" lines to assess children's safety knowledge and safety strategies for a wide range of potentially dangerous situations. The same schedule was used in both countries.

The children were interviewed twice. Although all of the Australian children had been introduced to *Protective Behaviours* between the first and second interviews, there was no marked improvement in the quality of their responses. At re-interview, the majority of Australian students still could not provide "safe" suggestions to a number of "What if ..." questions, including ones involving safety with strangers, staying safe when lost, and dealing with a baby sitter who wanted to play an "undressing game". The majority of children did not differentiate between secrets to keep and secrets to tell and did not understand their right to reject inappropriate touching.

While some children had made progress, most of these came from the oldest group (aged 8-9 years) and had been taught by an enthusiastic teacher who used *Protective Behaviours* as a day-to-day teaching strategy and had written an integrated curriculum which involved parents.

The first evaluation supported the superiority of the New Zealand *Keeping Ourselves Safe* program in developing personal safety concepts in young children. The disappointing South Australian results were attributed to:

- a lack of continuity in teaching: a year after the initial interview, none of the children were currently taught by teachers who had previously taught *Protective Behaviours*;
- the fact that teachers used the program selectively, concentrating on safety in the classroom and playground and avoiding the more sensitive but vital aspects of child protection relating to the adult-child power differential and children's rights;
- the lack of parental involvement;
- the lack of teaching materials to help teachers tackle the sensitive issues which they found uncomfortable;
- the use of American terminology which was not part of children's everyday language;
- children's inability to grasp complex concepts and generalise them to different situations.

A recent study of the South Australian *Protective Behaviours* program gave "qualified support" to the efficacy of the program but noted a range of problems. In particular, teachers were selective users of the program and for a variety of reasons, including inadequate training and doubts about the value of the program for children, they did not teach the program as it was designed, and omitted crucial material.

FOLLOW-UP STUDY: NEW ZEALAND

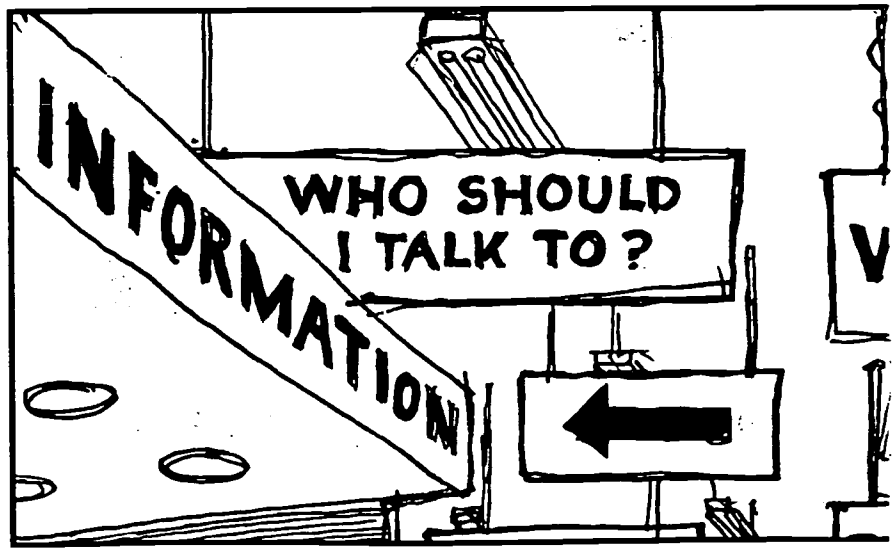
The initial superiority of the *Keeping Ourselves Safe* program had already been determined. In December 1991, 117 of the original New Zealand subjects were re-interviewed in order to determine longer-term effects. These children attended schools in the Porirua (Wellington) area, New Plymouth, and rural Taranaki.

The following aspects of the New Zealand *Keeping Ourselves Safe* program seemed to offer advantages over the *Protective Behaviours* program:

- The New Zealand schools are supported by Police Education Officers.
- The program is tightly structured.
- Teaching materials are provided for every stage of the program.
- The program is taught throughout the school at a particular time.
- Parent involvement and evaluation is built into the program.

About two-thirds of the children were Pakeha (Anglo-Saxon) and the others were Maori, Pacific Islander, and Asian. Children had now been interviewed at various times – before the program, at the end of the year in which the program was taught, at the end of the year following the year in which the program was taught, and in the case of one school, also at the end of the year following the second administration of the program.

Gains were measured in terms of safety knowledge or evidence of safety skills acquired. For example, pre-testing showed that some children did not know what they could do to stay safe if they became separated from a parent in a city department store. Some said that they would look for someone with a kind face and ask that



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person to take them home. Others would attempt to walk home, irrespective of the distance. A year later, some of these children said that they would tell the person at the Information Desk or tell a shop assistant who they were and what had happened and ask for an announcement to be made on the public address system. This was then calculated as a "gain" in safety knowledge.

As well as the previously found gains in the short term (measured at the end of the year in which the program was taught), further gains or consolidation of knowledge and skills in the following year occurred, even though there was no further formal teaching of the program.

Additional gains followed repetition of the program two years after its original implementation. We found that gender, race, and age had no effect on children's gains.

There were substantial differences in achievement which related to the variables of teacher commitment, parent's income levels, and parental participation in the program.

Teachers classified as "highly committed" achieved twice the number of gains as those with "average commitment". The highly committed teachers used the program conscientiously, often alongside curriculum to develop self-esteem and assertiveness skills. They integrated safety concepts into their day-to-day teaching strategies, provided parents with reports of children's progress, and indicated how the parents could help. Children in these classes were confident of their rights and confident that their teachers and parents would help them if they were concerned about someone's behaviour. They knew that they were not obliged to keep uncomfortable secrets, least of all those about "rude" behaviour. This group of children could suggest several safe strategies for handling potentially dangerous situations.

We found that prior to the *Keeping Ourselves Safe* program, children from low income families were relatively disadvantaged in all of the personal safety knowledge and skills we measured. For example, compared with middle class children, the children from lower income families were:

- less likely to believe that their parents would protect them from other adults who behaved inappropriately;
- more likely to have already sought help from parents to stop unwanted touching from relatives and been rejected;
- more likely to believe that they have to keep all adults' secrets and would be punished if they "told", especially if the secrets involved "rude" behaviour;
- at higher risk from truly dangerous strangers because their understanding of a "stranger" only related to males with a stereotypical appearance (mean or ugly looking, leering, wearing masks, balaclavas and black clothing and driving old black cars);

While the *Keeping Ourselves Safe* program led to gains across all social classes, it was clear that middle class children made more frequent gains than their classmates from lower income families. Between the first and second interviews, all middle class children had learned that they had the right to stop unwanted and inappropriate touching. By comparison, only 21 percent of low income family children had made progress in acquiring this message. Half of the children from low income families continued to think that if "rude" behaviour occurred, it was their own fault and they would be blamed and punished if they reported it.

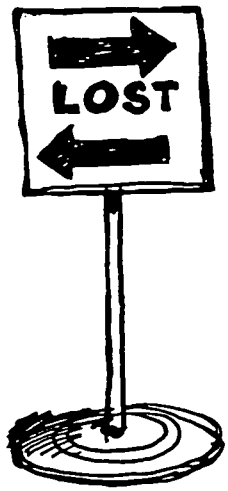
DISCUSSION

There is evidence that the *Keeping Ourselves Safe* program increased skills and knowledge in all of the measured areas associated with self protection in both the short and longer term. Repetition of the program led to further gains. Children who had been exposed to the program twice revealed that they possessed all the knowledge considered to be essential for personal safety. They were aware that some people use tricks, bribes, secrets and blackmail to persuade others to do things they would not normally do. They knew that it was important to report and stop "rude" behaviour and they could also suggest several different strategies for dealing with potentially dangerous situations.

Another investigation of *Keeping Ourselves Safe*, which used an untreated control group for comparison purposes showed that children made "substantial gains in knowledge of the key prevention concepts after participation in the program... these children show consolidation of learning with increased recall at follow up assessment".

Children from low income families were relatively disadvantaged in terms of their safety knowledge and skills. Even before the program began, these children had a lower level of knowledge about personal safety than children from middle income families. Once the program had been used, it was also clear that they made the poorest gains. A year later, the gap was still evident. We believe that the results relating to parents' income levels are best understood by looking at class differences in parental involvement. When parents were involved in school programs and evaluated children's learning, they were considered to be more approachable, more reliable, and more helpful by their children than parents with no involvement. Only 17 percent of children from low income families reported that a parent had tried to teach personal safety at home compared with 53 percent of middle class parents.

Overall, middle class children were significantly better prepared to resist and report sexual misbehaviour because middle class schools tended to have more parent participation in their programs and parent involvement proved to be a key mediating variable. Recent research confirms that children who are taught personal safety skills by parents and teachers in a co-operative effort are much more likely to remember them than children who are taught only by their teachers.



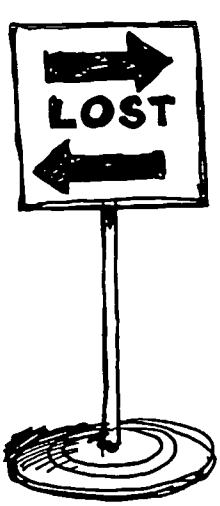
Our findings are consistent with the research literature which shows that children from low income families,

> The greatest challenge for schools is how to persuade parents that all children are at risk.

especially boys, are more vulnerable to abuse than children in middle class families. It is important to remember however, that middle class children are not immune from sexual victimisation and their superior knowledge was not acquired by virtue of their status but by a successful combination of teacher-parent effort.

Some children revealed that they were often placed in hazardous situations. Six-year-olds acted as baby sitters for babies and toddlers, had no child-minder overnight or were already playing "undressing games" with adolescent minders. Some children were worried by the behaviour of their mothers' boyfriends, their siblings and occasionally their grandparents. Some five and six year-olds reported that their parents never listened to them, never believed them and could not be approached when drunk. These vulnerable children were, not surprisingly, the most cynical and the most difficult to convince that they were valued and had any rights. During the interviews, three boys and two girls inadvertently reported sexual abuse in response to a general question about children's fears. A sixth child had just disclosed sibling incest to police.

One survey of South Australian parents found that child abuse came fourth on a list of twenty-two issues which concerned them. While 46 percent of parents were concerned about child abuse, they were also reluctant to attend parenting courses on prevention and they regarded professionals with scepticism. None of the schools in the present study found it easy to involve parents in their programs. Both Australian and New Zealand school principals complained that less than a third of the school population had a parent representative at child protection program information sessions. Most parents were content for schools to take full responsibility for the task.



Professional parents often explained that they were "too busy" to attend meetings and due to a false belief that sexual abuse wasn't likely to happen in their family, they regarded their own attendance as unnecessary.

Successful schools attracted parents by arranging day and evening meetings with child care facilities and refreshments. They emphasised the importance of participation by both parents because fathers otherwise tend to disassociate themselves and leave all aspects of child protection to mothers.

SUMMARY

The results show the benefits of a well designed child protection program. Teacher commitment, socioeconomic status and parental involvement were shown to be the key variables affecting gains in children's knowledge and skills. Low levels of socioeconomic status can be compensated for by maximising teacher commitment and parental participation. While sound teacher training and support materials for child protection programs are vital, the greatest challenge for schools is how to persuade parents that all children are at risk unless parents understand and encourage their children to practice personal safety skills. Quite clearly, the easiest and most effective way of educating children for safety is for parents to work in partnership with their children's school.

NOTES

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The short-term effectiveness of* Protective Behaviours *and* Keeping Ourselves Safe *has been reported in:

Briggs, F. (1991). Keeping ourselves safe: A personal safety curriculum examined. ***set:** Research Information for Teachers, 2*(7).

Briggs, F. (1991). Child protection programmes: Can they protect young children? *Early Child Development and Care*, 67, 61-72.

The study which gave qualified support to the South Australian* Protective Behaviours *program is:

Johnson, B. (1995). *Teaching and learning about personal safety: Report of the review of* Protective Behaviours *in South Australia*. Adelaide: Painters Prints.

The quote of another investigation of* Keeping Ourselves Safe *is from page 85 of:

Perniske, L.M. (1995). *Child protection programmes: What do children learn and remember?* Keeping Ourselves Safe – *An evaluation with follow up*. Master of Arts in Psychology Thesis. Victoria University of Wellington.

That children who are taught personal safety skills i a co-operative effort by teachers and parents are much more likely to remember than children taught only by their teachers is reported in:

Wurtele, S.K., Kast, L.C. & Melter, A.M. (1992). Sexual abuse prevention education for young children: A comparison of teachers and parents as instructors. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 16*(6), 877.

That children from low income families are more vulnerable to abuse than children in middle class families is reported by:

Finkelhor, D. (1964). *Child sexual abuse: New theory and research*. New York: The Free Press.

The survey of South Australian parents which found that child abuse came fourth on a list of 22 issues is:

Hunt, G., Hawkins, R. & Goodlet, T. (1992). Parenting: survey of community needs. *Children Australia, 17*(3). 9-12.

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THERE WILL STILL BE DAYS
PROFILE OF A TRUANT

Patricia Berwick-Emms

THIS CASE STUDY was written up because truancy is much in the news today, but very little is said about solutions. Names have, naturally, been changed, and places left out, to avoid identification.

Solutions

There are various theories about solutions. For example, we have the draconian theories: 'Just employ a truancy officer, he'll get them back to school without all this fuss.' 'Just take the family's benefits away from them. That will make them get them off to school.' 'If they don't want to go to school that's their problem. They'll soon learn when they cannot get a job.

Then there are the social theories. 'Call a family conference. That places the responsibility back on the families.' 'You have to find out what the underlying cause is. You can't expect them to learn if they have a major problem.' 'Give them counselling. Then they will go to school.' 'The schools are not doing their job. Improve the quality of teaching and all the children will want to go to school.'

And there are the behaviour theories. 'Set up a structured programme for the child that fits the child and the child will go to school.' 'Home is more interesting than school. The parents must make home a less attractive environment.'

In New Zealand, where I live, there have been several programmes which have demonstrated how to help settle children back at school; for example, Mita Mohi's Taiaha Programme in Rotorua and Te Reo Whanaungatunga interpersonal and family relationships programme in Christchurch. Highly structured programmes like the return to school programme offered by the Child and Family Unit at Burwood Hospital, Christchurch have also been demonstrated to work. But what of the other suggestions?

Profile of a truant

The following is a brief case study of a truant. She began truanting at kindergarten and was attending school only 10 percent of the school year by 14 years of age, when a solution was finally found.

Sarah is a beautiful young blond-headed girl who has always appeared to have an interest in life, if not in school. Her father died when Sarah was four and her mother was the sole care-giver in the family during most of Sarah's early life.

Early days

Sarah's mother's first recollections of school refusal was when Sarah went to kindergarten. Sarah would scream and cry when it was time for her mother to leave her unattended at kindergarten. Sarah said to her mother about this time, 'I hate you because you left me!'

When she started school she liked it. She loved books, colouring in and reading. But by the time she was in Std. 2 (Year 3) sore stomachs and other aches and pains became the norm. Sarah continued to enjoy her school-work but felt intimidated by the other children at play-times and lunch-times. Her mother would have to argue with her nearly each morning about getting dressed, eating breakfast and, of course, going to school. Sarah said she hated the cattiness of the girls at school. Making friends and maintaining them was difficult.

When Sarah was small it was relatively easy to ensure she got to school most days. Her mother did not like having to push her off to school but she did it. She followed the advice of the teacher and offered rewards if she got to school without causing a problem. Nothing her mother did worked for the long term.

The mother sought help from the school psychologist, from the Visiting Teacher (Liaison Teacher) and from the Public Health Nurse. She believed she carried out all the suggestions offered to both herself and Sarah.

About this time the unhappiness at school prompted a visit to Child and Family Guidance. It was here that Sarah found out about her father's suicide. Mother explained this in her own time and in her own way. The father had been diagnosed schizophrenic and did not seem to be able to find a way to be happy. Her mother said, 'How was I to tell a four-year-old her father had committed suicide?' She had told both children their father had been ill and died.

They went consistently to Child and Family Guidance for a number of months although at times the mother felt the therapist failed to understand the problem fully. In later years the mother realized that a change of therapist would have been beneficial but felt it was a presumption on her part to ask for such a change at the time. During Sarah's time visiting Child and Family Guidance she attended school regularly then 9 or so months later the excuses began again.

Middle Years

By the time Sarah was in Std. 3 (Year 4) she was quite good at school refusal and Sarah's mother was beginning to become very tired of the constant battle. She did not have this problem with her other children.

During this time period a 14-year-old boy touched Sarah inappropriately. The family returned to Child and Family Guidance.

The class teacher implied it was Sarah's mother who was school refusing and not Sarah. The mother began to feel quite helpless. She found herself yelling at Sarah frequently. The family doctor said, 'Don't argue with her. You tell her. Your problem is you let her have a say!' Sarah's mother tried this to no avail. Sarah was sent to a Health Camp. She could not cope there and hitch-hiked home.

It was not until Intermediate School (Years 11 and 12) that Sarah's mother had the strength to ask for help again. She asked the Department of Social Welfare (as it was called then). Through this some relief was found for Sarah and her mother with a time-out fostering programme. Sarah was still not attending school regularly. The Department of Social Welfare provided some support for the mother but when Sarah returned home the non-attendance continued and no change eventuated. Follow-up counselling was provided by the Department of Social Welfare specialist services and things were calm for a time.

Sarah's mother was trying to keep a job and had recently remarried. This meant there were new children to be fitted into the family. Sarah did not cope well with this. Sarah's school refusal worsened.

High School

Her high school was chosen by her mother, who consulted with the guidance counsellor and Sarah. Sarah continued to school refuse despite a flexible school programme and intense consultation with the mother and Sarah. Nothing seemed to work. Sarah said of herself, 'You don't know how much I want to be like that!' (i.e., going to school like other children). By this time Sarah was in her fourth form year. Her mother said, what she wanted to be, and the reality of where she was at at that time, were two different things.

During this time period the Youth Aid Police rang the Visiting Teacher of the Special Education Service. Sarah had been involved in a minor shoplifting offence.

The Visiting Teacher visited the home and talked with both the mother and Sarah. She heard the despair and anxiety in the mother over all she had tried to do. Sarah herself was unwilling to participate in any therapy programme.

Work experience

After a number of visits and phone calls a programme was set up at school which met Sarah's needs and a 'carrot' was offered to Sarah of something she believed she really wanted to do. This 'carrot' was work-experience at two of the top local hairdressing salons.

This was done because the Visiting Teacher believed Sarah needed to see her school refusal was not refusal of school alone but refusal to do anything which confined her in any way. Sarah lasted one visit to one salon and not much longer at the other. Sarah herself was shocked. She had wanted to leave home - it was, after all, the one last place which confined her. Now she realised she could not keep herself. She had no way to earn money.

The involvement of the Visiting Teacher made Sarah realize it was time to sort things out. Sarah's mother also felt supported by being able to ring the Visiting Teacher as problems emerged.

Because Sarah was now ready for counselling again it was possible to involve the Department of Social Welfare once more. (The government agency now handling such work is the Children's and Young Persons' Service.) They were able to provide the safety-net of a foster family if necessary and ensured therapy was provided.

Back to school

Some months later Sarah was re-introduced to school in a planned programme. She attended school regularly. She has been able to face her worst fear which was to do with the early death through suicide of her father. Sarah now has a chance at a happy future adult life. The co-ordinated approach has worked.

Today Sarah is still happy and her confidence has improved. She knows she made a tremendous effort in successfully returning to school. When she returned she still had the occasional days off but these were for ill-health. Her mother still had a fear which gripped her stomach in case the refusal began again. It is Sarah who comforts her by saying, 'There still will be days Mum, but I will be alright.'

Although the absences have increased in recent months Sarah feels she needs to look for work. She has reached school-leaving age and is ready for work. Although a capable girl, the lack of qualification will severely handicap her in this pursuit.

Gathering up the ends

For young people like Sarah an effective co-ordinated programme needs to be put in place as soon as the problem is identified. Ideally this should be a programme which includes the parent, the class-teacher with perhaps an outside co-ordinator (e.g., Visiting Teacher) to ensure a communicative structure is maintained throughout the whole process. Parents need to understand and feel confident that the school personnel are there to help and will listen even when they, the parents, feel they are unable to solve the problem themselves.

Parents have a sense of failure when their children do not want to go to school and if their children go as far as refusing to go to school this feeling intensifies.

Teachers must first understand that the parent is doing all they can under the prevailing circumstances, then try to find joint solutions through classroom programmes or supporting positive friendship relationships. Children need to be heard when they cannot deal with bullies or cattiness among other students. Many children cannot solve such problems alone. If solutions cannot be found within the school then outside help needs to be sought. This should not be months down the track. Five or six weeks of non-attendance is more than enough to establish a school-life time problem.

Sarah's problems may have been solved early on if teachers had have understood how the cattiness of other children was affecting her and if at the same time Sarah's mother had have felt supported by the school and not felt viewed as a non-coping mother. Such a programme was essential as support for the therapy programme provided by Child and Family Guidance.

Nothing can be achieved in a vacuum. A child's life is part of a continuum. All the early help provided for Sarah was to the point but piece-meal. The whole child within her family and school community was not supported.

There are hundreds of children in our schools who, like Sarah, are truants. Each one of them has different reasons for avoiding school; we need to look to see what has been done to help in order to find what will work. No effective long-term programmes can be established until many possible solutions are examined for successes.

Notes

PATRICIA BERWICK-EMMS PhD, is a Visiting Teacher, working for the Special Education Service. In NZ truant officers had the duty only of enforcing the law. The Visiting Teacher's job is much more one of guidance and assistance. Her PhD thesis was on the 'Hidden Curriculum'; that is, the effect or mis-match between home communications systems and school communications systems on achievement.

An important NZ report on truancy is

Dunn, Mary; Bennie, Ngaire; Kerslake, Jacqui (1991) *Who's Not Here?*, Wellington: Research and Statistics Division, Ministry of Education.

A recent investigation into truancy in a large South Australian high school where 359 boys and 441 girls were surveyed, came up with these figures:

Percentage of children who said that they had 'wagged' school 'lots of times'

	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Boys	8.7 (9)	16.2 (12)	15.7 (18)	24.4 (15)
Girls	.8 (1)	17.9 (19)	23.2 (22)	32.6 (30)

Actual numbers in parentheses.

Thus, over a four year period we are looking at 15 percent of boys and 18 percent of girls (of course the more senior students were considering a longer period at school).

The NSW South Coast Region publishes a booklet which assists schools develop plans for students coming back after illness, from being reluctant attenders, from suspension, or travel. It is called *Coming Back* and is available from Student Welfare Coordination, Department of School Education, PO Box 1232, Wollongong, NSW 2500.

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Family Violence and Children:

HOW SCHOOLS CAN RESPOND

PAULA SHEPHERD
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN, WELLINGTON

ADELE JACKSON

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FAMILY VIOLENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

Family violence is gaining recognition as serious issue in New Zealand. Nevertheless, it still remains a very hidden problem, often not reported to police. Information from several New Zealand sources gives some idea of the problem. New Zealand Police estimate up to 80 percent of all violence is domestic related. In 1994, over 5000 women stayed in Women's Refuges throughout New Zealand, bringing nearly 8000 children with them. Women's Refuges also assisted nearly 4000 women and 4000 children who remained in the community. Moreover, there are likely to be many other women who are physically abused but who do not seek help.

Family violence can end tragically in death. Most homicides occur in or around the home and are committed by someone who knows the victim. In New Zealand during 1978-1987, 40 percent of all homicide victims knew their assailant through an intimate relationship, such as marriage, or as a family member. In most of these cases the victim was a woman. Where homicide victims were children, in two–thirds of the cases the assailant was the child's parent or guardian. This information and figures from Women's Refuge and New Zealand Police indicate that family violence is a severe problem from which children are not isolated or excluded. Furthermore, research suggests that most battered women are mothers. Consequently, there may be large numbers of children who are living in homes characterised by family violence.

CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mothers may minimise or even deny their children's involvement in family violence, believing that they are asleep or unable to hear the abuse while they are in their bedrooms. However, children's reports of family violence demonstrate that children can fully describe assaults that their mothers had no idea children were aware of. Furthermore, even if children do not witness the abuse they will see the consequences —their mother's pain and injuries.

Data collected from Hamilton Abuse Intervention Pilot Project (HAIPP) indicates that children in violent homes are very likely to witness spousal abuse. The data was compiled from family violence incidents which the police had attended. The analysis revealed a number of disturbing findings about the experiences of children in these violent homes.

- In 62 percent of the incidents the victims had children in their care.
- In 87 percent of these cases, children were at home at the time of the incident, and usually witnessed the assault.
- In 19 percent of cases where children were present they were also physically abused or were the principal victims of the attack.
- In cases where children witnessed the assault, 10 percent tried to intervene and 6 percent attempted to get help.

In addition, statistics from the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges indicate that 90 percent of children staying at Women's Refuge had witnessed violence in the home. These findings support those of an earlier Christchurch study by Church. Of a group of 228 children from violent homes, mothers reported that 86 percent of children had been exposed to violent conflict from their earliest years. These reports reveal children are very much involved in family violence, often witnessing horrifying acts of violence as well as sometimes being injured themselves.

RISK OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

Marital violence is very strongly associated with child abuse. Furthermore, when children try to protect the victimised parent their risk for physical injury is likely to increase considerably. Children are not at risk just from their fathers. Child abuse can result from aggression when an angry, frustrated, powerless parent misdirects hostility intended for the abusive parent onto the even more powerless child.

RISK OF NEGLECT

Children living in violent homes are also at risk of neglect. Battered women may be unable to support or nurture their children because of their own victimisation. They may be barely able to cope with their own emotional and physical survival. Women who have been abused are often battling their own problems which can include depression, anxiety, and helplessness. The distress of children exposed to family violence is likely to increase when the assaulted parent is unable to reassure or comfort their children.

CONSEQUENCES OF LIVING IN A VIOLENT HOME

Family violence produces an environment of multiple stresses and difficulties for children, not the least of which include:

- living in an atmosphere of fear of the next conflict or assault;
- fear of injury to their mother and themselves;
- possible scapegoating of children or manipulation by parents to take sides;
- an atmosphere of unreality and confusion if violence is down-played or ignored by parents;
- a confusion for children if violence alternates with some loving periods between parents;
- repeated separations from a parent and disruption in the child's home and school environments;
- struggling to be "super children" in an attempt to make their mother's life easier and/or stop conflict at home;
- being burdened with adult responsibilities that their mother cannot cope with, for example, caring for younger siblings;
- taking on guilt and blame both for causing the violence and for not being able to stop it.

THE IMPACT OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Research and clinical literature have only just begun to uncover the possible negative consequences for children living in a home where there is violence. Children who observe violence and who experience any type of abuse risk having behavioural and developmental problems.

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

Much of the research investigating the impact of family violence on children has been consistent in identifying problems likely to be experienced by children. These include:

- suffering shock, distress, and confusion;
- developing low self-esteem and depression;
- becoming quiet and withdrawn, and crying a lot;

For the purposes of this article, family violence refers to the use of physical aggression against other family members living in the same household. It is recognised that in the majority of cases, serious family violence is perpetrated by males against their female partners. In addition, it is likely that in a family where there is physical abuse there is also psychological abuse. Psychological abuse may include the following types of behaviours: humiliation or degradation, restriction of social contacts, intimidation, use of threats, and restriction of financial resources.

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- being anxious, scared, and feeling powerless and insecure;
- becoming aggressive and violent;
- having problems at school with studies;
- having difficulty getting on with other children;
- having sleeping problems, nightmares, and wetting the bed;
- health complaints such as stomachaches, headaches, and asthma;
- hyperactivity and lack of control;
- conduct problems such as delinquency, truancy, and stealing.

For instance, an investigation into the occurrence of behavioural and emotional problems of children staying at a women's refuge found that children who had witnessed violence were two and a half times more likely to have behavioural and emotional problems needing clinical help than those children in the community who had not witnessed violence. Forty-seven percent of boys and 36 percent of girls fell within this clinical range of behaviour problems.

In addition, children who have witnessed parental violence and children who have both witnessed and been physically abused exhibited lower self-esteem, higher levels of distress, and higher levels of anxiety than a group of children from nonviolent families.

ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

Children exposed to family violence may have problems with concentration and control and, as a result, school work may suffer. Investigators have found that children from violent homes scored significantly lower on tests of mathematical and reading abilities than children from nonviolent homes. Similarly, studies show that the reading age of children exposed to violence is significantly lower than their chronological age, when tested for both accuracy and comprehension. In contrast, other children may do very well at school, trying very hard to please their parents.

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Children from violent homes may also have difficulties with social interaction. Children who bully, intimidate, and threaten may be displaying behaviours they have seen at home. These children do not know how to interact appropriately and suffer isolation as a result of their behaviour. In contrast, other children may become passive in any social relationship and view their own actions as ineffective when interacting with more powerful children. Avoidance of social interaction may be adopted, which maintains and increases fear and alienation. In addition, children of battered women have been reported as performing at a significantly lower levels on measures of empathy than children who are not from violent homes. It has been suggested that deficiency of empathy skills may be predispose children to poor interpersonal relationships and inhibit the development of intimate relationships.

LONG TERM IMPACT

Children who witness violence often have inappropriate attitudes about violence. Research has shown children exposed to violence were more likely to condone violence as a means of resolving conflict in human relationships. Children exposed to family violence are likely to learn a number of things from violent parents, for instance, that:

- those who love you also hurt you;
- violence has a place within family interaction;
- violence is an appropriate and successful means of problem solving conflict resolution;
- violence is an appropriate means of stress management;
- violence is a logical conclusion of a conflict in a relationship;
- victims of violence should, at best, tolerate this behaviour, and at worst, examine their responsibility in causing the violence;
- if violence is reported to others in the community, including mental health and criminal justice professionals, there may be few, if any consequences.

What children learn from involvement in family violence may place them at risk for subsequent poor and/or violent interpersonal relationships. Children exposed to family violence may become adult abusers or be abused themselves in adulthood. Research on adult spouse abusers has reported that they were more likely than their nonviolent comparison to have observed violence between their parents.

AGE AND GENDER

Research findings conflict regarding the different effect that gender and age may have on the impact of family violence on children. It has been suggested that younger children are more likely to respond to family violence with health complaints such as wetting the bed, headaches, stomachaches and diarrhoea. Older children are thought to respond with more sex stereotypical ways — boys reacting with aggressive behaviours and girls responding with more passive and anxious behaviours. However, the research is not conclusive and not all children will be affected in the same way as there are a variety of factors which may contribute to the impact of family violence.

HOW SCHOOLS CAN RESPOND

Children in violent homes are often very isolated from any contacts, support, or activities outside the home. It is possible that school is the only place where their need for help or protection is identified. If a child discloses information about family violence teachers should:

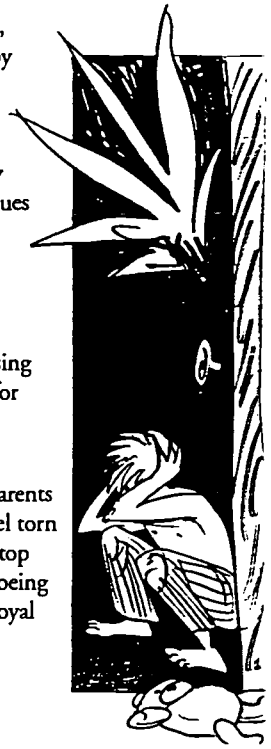
- listen calmly without overreacting to the child's disclosure;
- reassure the child that they are not to blame;
- be supportive;
- act to protect the child by referring to the appropriate authority when this is required;
- not guarantee confidentiality or a quick fix.

It is important for schools to develop family violence policies and community networks. Teachers should not be expected to act as therapists nor should they be expected to act alone. Teachers should have the support of the school and appropriate resources to call upon in order to make referrals and report dangers.

In developing guidelines to meet the individual needs of children it may be necessary to provide an overall school climate conducive to successful intervention. This can be achieved by implementing programmes within schools which educate children from primary level upwards about family violence and nonviolent ways of conflict resolution and problem solving. North American schools in several areas have successfully put in place such curriculum materials and complemented this by networking with appropriate agencies.

On an individual level, teachers can respond by being aware of the problem of family violence and its effects on children. Also, they need to be aware of issues likely to be salient for children. These may involve the following:

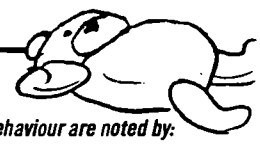
- feeling personally responsible for causing violence as well as for stopping it;
- confusion and guilt about loyalties to parents — children may feel torn between trying to stop their mother from being hurt and being disloyal to their father;



- ambivalence toward parents — children may resent their mother because of her inability to protect herself or the children and disapprove of their father's violence;
- feeling frightened of their own anger — children have learned that violence is an inevitable consequence of anger and may fear that they will be violent.

Teachers should not be lenient or tolerant of a child's aggressive behaviour in an attempt to compensate for their harsh home life. Teachers should respond firmly to coercive and aggressive behaviour to teach children that violent behaviour is unacceptable. In addition, it is important to provide structure and boundaries to the child's time at school as a balance for possible turmoil at home.

It may be difficult for children to talk about their feelings and experiences of family violence, in which case indirect methods of communication may be useful. Creative activities such as art can allow children to communicate their home difficulties. Also, games about different sorts of feelings may provide children an outlet for what has happened to them.



NOTES

PAULA SHEPHERD is a post graduate student at the Psychology Department at Victoria University of Wellington. This paper was written on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner for Children as part of a group of studies.

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SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTION

Peter Jaffe, a prominent psychologist in the area of children and family violence, can be contacted at London Family Court Clinic, 254 Pall Mall St, suite 200, London, Ontario, N6A 5P6, Canada. The clinic offers an anti-violence school based initiative which includes a manual and video. Other programmes are available in Australia and the USA. For further information see Maxwell (1995).

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN SCHOOL

The Public Performance of Gendered Violence

NAN STEIN, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, Massachusetts

Sexual harassment in schools is a form of gendered violence that often happens in the public arena. While highly publicised lawsuits and civil rights cases may have increased public awareness of the issue, inconsistent findings have sent educators mixed messages about ways of dealing with peer-to-peer sexual harassment. The antecedents of harassment are found in teasing and bullying, behaviours tacitly accepted by parents and teachers. Here is a case for deliberate adult intervention and the inclusion of a curriculum in schools that builds awareness of these issues.

Ask Beth, a teenage advice column syndicated across the United States, often includes letters from youngsters describing their experiences of sexual harassment at school. On February 3, 1994 the column in the *Boston Globe* contained this letter:

Dear Beth:

I am 11 years old and there's a boy in my class who just won't leave me alone. He chases after me and my best friend during recess. He hits and kicks me on the behind, stomach and legs. Once he slapped me so hard it brought tears to my eyes.

I try to tell my teacher, but she just laughs and tells him, "If you like her so much, ask her for her phone number." Is this sexual harassment? If it is, what should I do?

HATES BEING HARASSED

When I read this letter aloud to middle school and high school students, from Maryland to Alaska, and ask them, "If these people were older, what might we call these behaviours?" I received answers like "dating violence", "assault", "domestic violence", and "stalking". Yet, this teacher, this *woman* teacher, infantilised these assaultive behaviours, maybe perceiving them as flattery or as efforts from a youthful suitor. Do children know something that adults don't want to know?

SEEING IS NOT BELIEVING

Thousands of pre-teen and teenage girls, responding to two open-ended questions in a self-report survey published in the September 1992 issue of *Seventeen* magazine, revealed stories about the tenacity and pervasiveness of sexual harassment in schools. Letters by the thousands, with messages scribbled on envelopes – "Open", "Urgent", "Please Read" – and handwritten on lined notebook paper or perfumed stationery, all begged for attention, for answers, and, above all, for some type of acknowledgment and justice. The following testimonials are girls' voluntary elaborations, which we received in response to the questions, "What do you think schools should do to prevent sexual harassment?" and "If you've been sexually harassed at school, how did it make you feel?"

Of the times I was sexually harassed at school, one of them made me feel really bad. I was in class and the teacher was looking right at me when this guy grabbed my butt. The teacher saw it happen. I slapped the guy and told him not to do that. My teacher didn't say anything and looked away and went on with the lesson like nothing out of the ordinary had happened. It really confused me because I knew guys weren't supposed to do that, but the teacher didn't do anything. I felt like the teacher (who was a man) betrayed me and thought I was making a big deal out of nothing. But most of all, I felt really bad about myself because it made me feel slutty and cheap. It made me feel mad too because we shouldn't have to put up with that stuff, but no one will do anything to stop it. Now sexual harassment doesn't bother me as much because it happens so much it almost seems normal. I know that sounds awful, but the longer it goes on without anyone doing anything, the more I think of it as just one of those things that I have to put up with.

14 years old

In my case there were two or three boys touching me, and trust me they were big boys. And I'd tell them to stop but they wouldn't! This went on for about six months until finally I was in [one] of my classes in the back of the room minding my own business when all of them came back and backed me into a corner and started touching me all over. So I went running out of the room and the teacher yelled at me and I had to stay in my seat for the rest of the class. But after the class I told the principal, and him and the boys had a little talk. And after the talk was up, the boys came out laughing cause they got no punishment.

12 years old

The guys would want you to let them touch you all over. But I was one of the girls that would not do that. Then one day they thought they would do it anyway. So I defended myself like you should. I kind of hurt him. The teacher caught me hitting him. And I got in trouble for hitting him. The teacher took him out of the room for his story and he lied and said he did nothing. My teacher wouldn't believe my story. I was the one getting in trouble. The school and the principal wouldn't listen to me.

13 years old

These girls recognised that incidents of sexual harassment are often witnessed by adults, and expect the adults to see and feel these

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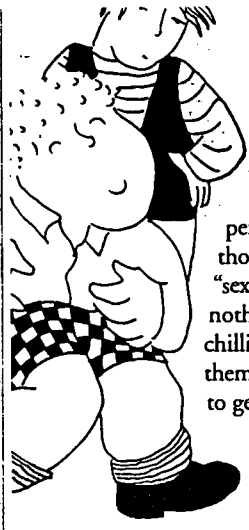

violations as they do. Yet, many girls cannot get confirmation of their experiences from school personnel because most of those adults do not name it as "sexual harassment" and do nothing to stop it. These chilling stories and others like them reveal girls' repeated efforts to get adults to see and believe what is happening right before their eyes, and to do something about it. These young women begin to sound ominously like battered women who are not believed or helped by the authorities and who feel alone and abandoned. Listen again to the voices of students speaking about the public nature of sexual harassment:

> At first I didn't really think of it because it was considered a "guy thing", but as the year went on, I started to regret going to school, especially my locker, because I knew if I went I was going to be cornered and be touched, or had some comment blurted out at me. I just felt really out of place and defenseless and there was nothing I could do.
>
> 14 years old

> It was like fighting an invisible, invincible enemy alone, I didn't have a clue as to what to do to stop it, so I experimented with different approaches. Ignoring it only made it worse. It made it easier for them to do it, so they did it more. Laughing at the perpetrators during the assaults didn't dent the problem at all, and soon my friends became tired of doing this. They thought it was a game. Finally I wrote them threatening letters. This got me in trouble, but perhaps it did work. I told the school administrators what had been happening to me. They didn't seem to think it a big deal, but they did talk to the three biggest perpetrators. The boys ignored the administrators and it continued. And they were even worse.
>
> 14-15 years old

> I have told teachers about this a number of times; each time nothing was done about it. Teachers would act as if I had done something to cause it. Once I told a guidance counsellor, but was made to feel like a whore when she asked me questions like "Do you like it?" and "They must be doing it for a reason. What did you do to make them do it?"
>
> 13 years old

These stories illustrate injustices of considerable magnitude and suggest that schools may be training grounds for the insidious cycle of domestic violence. Girls are taught that they are on their own, that the adults and others around them will not believe or help them; in essence, they are trained to accept the battering and assault.

Girls (and sometimes boys) who are the targets of sexual harassment find that when they report sexual harassment or assault, the events are trivialised while they, the targets, are simultaneously demeaned and/or interrogated. Boys, on the other hand, receive permission, even training to become batterers, because many of their assaults on girls are not interrupted or condemned by the adults in the school environment. Indeed, if school authorities sanction the students who sexually harass by not intervening, the schools may be encouraging a continued pattern of violence in relationships. This encouragement goes beyond those directly involved; it also conveys a message to those who observe these incidents that to engage in such behaviour is acceptable. Other bystanders may receive the message that they may be the next to be harassed, and no one will do anything to prevent it.

Sexual harassment, when it occurs in schools, is unwanted and unwelcomed behaviour of a sexual nature that interferes with the right to receive an equal educational opportunity. It is a form of sex discrimination.

In schools, harassment often happens while many people watch. This public enactment of sexual harassment may have more damaging ramifications than harassment that happens in private because of the potential for public humiliation, the damage to one's reputation, the rumours targets must fear and combat, and the strategies that the targets implement in an effort to reduce or avoid the encounters. When sexual harassment occurs in public and is not condemned, it becomes, with time, part of the social norm.

TEASING AND BULLYING, OR BACK TO THE FUTURE

The antecedents of peer sexual harassment in schools may be found in "bullying" – behaviours children learn, practise, and experience beginning at a very young age. Children know what a bully is, and many boys as well as girls have been victims of bullying. Teachers and parents know about bullying, and many accept it as an unfortunate stage that some children go through on their way to adolescence and adulthood.

Despite its prevalence, bullying remains an under-studied phenomenon in the United States. I was drawn to the problem of bullying through my work on sexual harassment in junior high and high schools, beginning in 1979. It became clear to me that, left unchecked and unchallenged, bullying might in fact serve as fertile practice ground for sexual harassment. I began a search for appropriate strategies, interventions, and a conceptual framework that might help elementary educators bring this subject into their classrooms.

In late 1992, I received support from the Patrina Foundation, a private foundation located in New York, to conduct a small pilot project that involved seven classrooms in three elementary schools. Working with fourth- and fifth-grade teachers and their students in two schools for one year and in a third school for a period of more than two years, I developed and implemented eight to ten sequential classroom lessons, writing activities, reading assignments, and role plays that engaged children to think about the distinctions between "teasing" and "bullying". These activities helped the children focus on the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate, hurtful behaviour. In this unit, eventually named *Bullyproof*, children gained a conceptual framework and a common vocabulary that allowed them to find their own links between teasing and bullying, and eventually sexual harassment. The following reflections, written anonymously at the end of the unit by fifth-grade students between the ages of ten and eleven years, in a multiracial classroom, displayed new conceptual connections and insights about themselves and their classmates.

> Well, since we started this, people in my class and I learned a lot. Now they stopped doing mean things to each other. Like now that people know how I felt when they called me "shrimp" and "shorty" and other mean things they stopped doing that. Now we don't hurt other people's feelings and respect one another even if the person is short, tall or opposite sex. (male)

> I do see a difference in the way that all of the boys in the class are treating the girls now. First, they have mostly stopped teasing us and chasing us down the hallways while we are coming back from recess. Second, the boys have also mostly stopped insulting all of the girls and trying to dis us. I think that the girls have also mostly stopped teasing and bullying all of the shrimpy or short boys. (female)

> I really think sexual harassment can hurt because sometimes people may tease you about your body parts and it really hurts your feelings because you can't change them in any way. It can also interfere with your school work because all your thoughts are on your anger and then you can't concentrate. If I am harassed in the future, I will stand up for my rights and if a teacher doesn't care, I will pressure him or her to punish my harasser. (male)

Bullying and its connections to sexual harassment in schools are of critical importance. This link is one that educators need to make explicit and public by deliberately discussing these subjects in age-appropriate ways with children. If educators

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and advocates pose and present the problem as "bullying" to young children, rather than labelling it immediately as "sexual harassment", we can engage children and universalise the phenomenon as one that boys as well as girls will understand and accept as problematic. Hopefully, such an approach will go a long way towards developing compassion and empathy in the students. Moreover, we can simultaneously avoid demonising all little boys as potential harassers by initially presenting these hurtful and offensive behaviours as bullying.

THE SURVEYS AND THE LAWSUITS

The media's attention to the problem of sexual harassment in schools has in large part been generated by lawsuits and surveys on sexual harassment in schools. Results from two recent national surveys on this topic illustrate its pernicious, persistent, and public nature, and demonstrate that it is a widespread, endemic phenomenon. The first survey, developed by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and cosponsored by the National Organization for Women's (NOW) Legal Defense and Education Fund, was published in the September 1992 issue of *Seventeen* magazine (the most widely read magazine for teenage girls in the United States, with 1.9 million subscribers, and a "passalong" circulation of 8 to 10 million girls). The results were compiled from a nonscientific, random sample of 2000 girls aged nine to nineteen, selected from a total of 4300 surveys received by the deadline of September 30, 1992. They were released in March 1993.

In two-thirds of the reports of incidents of sexual harassment in the *Seventeen* study, the girls reported that other people were present. The most frequently cited location of witnessed incidents was the classroom: 94 percent of the girls who indicated that others were present when harassment occurred reported that it occurred in the classroom, 76 percent of those who reported that other people were present during the harassment cited the hallway, and 69 percent cited the parking lot or the playing fields (note that respondents often cited more than one location).

The second survey, conducted by the Harris Poll, was commissioned by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Foundation and released in June 1993. The study used a random sample of 1600 boys and girls in eighth through eleventh grades in seventy-nine public [state] schools. The boys and girls sampled in the Harris poll painted a similar portrait of sexual harassment, one that included public incidents occurring throughout the school. Of the 81 percent of the students who reported some experience of sexual harassment in school, 66 percent said they had been harassed at least once in the hall; 55 percent reported the classroom as the site of their harassment; 43 percent happened outside the school, on school grounds (other than the parking lot); 39 percent reported harassment in the gym, playing field, or pool area; 34 percent were in the cafeteria; and 23 percent named the parking lot as the site of the harassment. Interestingly, students indicated that locker rooms (19 percent) and rest rooms (10 percent), presumably gender-segregated sites, were also locations for sexual harassment.

At least four important findings emerged from these surveys:

- Sexual harassment is pervasive in secondary schools (experienced by 85 percent of the girls in the Harris Poll/AAUW study and 89 percent of the girls in the *Seventeen* survey).
- Students consider sexual harassment a serious problem (75 percent from the Harris Poll/AAUW survey, 70 percent in the *Seventeen* survey).
- The behaviour occurs in public places (two-thirds of the situations reported in both studies).
- Students have difficulty getting help, even though a majority in both surveys reported trying to talk to someone about the harassing behaviour.

The statistics that emerged from these surveys might have dropped quickly into oblivion were it not for the complaints and lawsuits that girls and young women have been filing, and winning, in state and federal courts in the past few years. It takes only one influential case to change the landscape and the discourse about sexual harassment. Such a change occurred in February 1992 with the landmark 9-0 United States Supreme Court decision in *Franklin v. Gwinnett County (GA) Public Schools*. In this case, the Court decided that schools could be held liable for compensatory damages if they failed to provide an educational environment that was free from sex discrimination. This decision has caused school personnel to pay increased attention to the problem of sexual harassment and sex discrimination in schools.

HOPES, ACTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As powerful and inspirational as legal decisions can be, we can't expect them to either enlighten educators or guarantee educational environments free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. We need to promote non-litigious remedies and to transport the lessons of the lawsuits into the classroom. Lawsuits can be preempted through preventive and sensible measures employed in the schools.

Hope and impetus for change come from school-wide efforts to normalise the conversation about sexual harassment and other forms of gendered violence. This may best be achieved by inserting age-appropriate and sequential materials into class discussions and school curricula. The traditional practice of addressing sexual harassment only through disciplinary action has had little effect on the frequency of gendered violence. Recent attempts to enlist draconian prohibitions against hand-holding and other forms of affectionate behaviour are also sure to fail.

Prior to initiating such classroom conversations, educators need to recognise sexual harassment in schools as a form of gendered violence that is often performed in public, sometimes in front of adults whose legal responsibility is to provide equal protection and equal educational opportunity. Sexual harassment can provide the impetus for opening the conversation about gendered violence.

Ultimately, a strategy to eliminate and prevent sexual harassment in schools needs to aim at a transformation of the broader school culture. Dealing effectively with sexual harassment is much easier if a school has committed itself to infuse a spirit of equity and a critique of injustice into its curriculum and pedagogy. On the other hand, harassment flourishes where children learn the art of doing nothing in the face of unjust treatment by others. When teachers subject children to an authoritarian pedagogy, they don't learn to think of themselves as moral subjects, capable of speaking out when they witness bullying or other forms of harassment. If youngsters have not been encouraged to critique the sexism of the curriculum, hidden and overt, then they are less likely to recognise it when they confront it in their midst. Too often, the entire school structure offers children no meaningful involvement in decision making about school policy, school climate, or other curriculum matters. Children rehearse being social spectators in their school lives.

We can make a difference in the classroom and beyond when we take up the subjects of teasing, bullying, and sexual harassment. When we frame the issue of sexual harassment as one of injustice and civil rights, and see the problem from the vantage points of the targets, the harassers, and the observers, we can teach empathy as we also teach children to emphasise and employ intervention strategies. In this way we teach children to see

themselves as "justice makers" as opposed to social spectators.

I end this article in the same way I began, with the words of children. This time, however, we hear from boys who confirm the experiences of the girls cited at the beginning of this article – that sexual harassment is present and very public in schools. Even for the boys who are observers, sexual harassment is sometimes scary, troubling, and certainly disruptive to the educational environment.

- Today, as usual, I observed sexist behaviour in my art class. Boys taunting girls and girls taunting boys has become a real problem. I wish they would all stop yelling at each other so that for once I could have art class in peace. This is my daily list of words I heard today in art that could be taken as sexual harassment: bitch, hooker, pimp, whore.

- Today for the first time I was witness to sexual harassment in my gym class. A couple of girls came into the exercise room today and suddenly, almost like a reflex, some of the boys began to whistle at them and taunt them. I was surprised since I had never seen this kind of behaviour from my gym class before. Some of the boys that I considered my friends even began to do it. It felt awful to watch, but if I said anything it would not stop them and would only hurt me.

- Today in class people reported their findings as ethnographers: that is, they told the class about the examples of sexual harassment they had witnessed. There were some pretty bad examples. It's amazing that this stuff goes on at our school. I think that part of the problem is that some kids don't know what sexual harassment is, so they don't know when they are doing it. One of the things that scared me was that no one said they had any trouble finding examples. Everybody had found at least one or two examples, and most people found many more. I found out that it happens everywhere: in the halls, the cafeteria, or even at basketball try-outs. It happens everywhere that teachers are not in direct supervision of students.

- I think it's good that the eighth-graders are doing the curriculum at the same time, because then we can discuss it during lunch and stuff. I really do think that people are learning a lot from it. I mean, the person at our table at lunch who used to really be a sexual harasser has stopped and actually turned nice when all the girls at our table told him to stop or we would get [teacher] into it. I don't think he realised that what he was doing was really making us uncomfortable.

- The sexual harassment [curriculum] is really doing the school some good. One of the harassers who has been always harassing any girl at all has stopped. X has stopped goosing and touching girls. I never thought I'd see the day – he no longer pinches girls and rubs up against them in the hall. Now I feel a lot more comfortable in art class. I have art with him, and now I don't have to always, literally, watch my back. And O has seen a lot of improvement. People are more conscious about what they say, and how they use words like gay, faggot, and lesbian. They realise that some people could really be offended by it.

These journal entries are hopeful in the way that they point out the impact that age-appropriate, deliberate, teacher-led conversations and curriculum can have on the lives of students. By creating a common classroom vocabulary and offering non-punitive and non-litigious ways to probe controversial and troubling subjects, educators and their students can confront and reduce sexual harassment and gendered violence in the schools. The first step is to recognise that sexual harassment is a common feature in children's school lives, and that the students – both boys and girls – recognise that most adults are sitting back, watching it happen. The next step is for the adults to name it as the children see it, and to take it on – publicly, in the classroom, and throughout the whole school community.

NOTES

NAN STEIN is a senior researcher and director of the sexual harassment in schools projects at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, Massachusetts. E-mail: nstein@wellesley.edu. Her book *Between the lines: Sexual harassment in K-12 schools* will be published by Teachers' College Press (of Columbia University) in 1997.

This article, reprinted with the kind permission of the publishers, is an edited version of:

Stein, N. (Summer 1995). Sexual harassment in school: The public performance of gendered violence. *Harvard Educational Review, 65* (2), 145-162.

Details of the 1992 survey in the magazine* Seventeen *can be found in:

Stein, N., Marshall, N., & Tropp, L. (1993). *Secrets in public: Sexual harassment in our schools.* (A report on the results of a *Seventeen* magazine survey). Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

Stein, N. (1992, November 4). Sexual harassment – an update. *Education Week*, p. 37.

The consequences of failing to label sexual harassment are noted in:

Stein, N. (1992). *Secrets in public: Sexual harassment in public (and private) schools.* (Working Paper No. 256). Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Centre for Research on Women.

Most studies on bullying in the United States have tended to focus on the sexually deviant child:

Cunningham, C., & MacFarlane, K.(1991). *When children molest children: Group treatment strategies for young sexual abuser.* Orwell, VT: Safer Society Press,

or on school violence:

Stepp, L. S. (1992, December 1). Getting tough with the big bad bullies. *Washington Post*, p. C5, which cites: National Center for Education Statistics, 1988, and Search Institute, 1990.

Further research on bullying includes:

Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Slaby, R., & Stringham, P. (1994). Prevention of peer and community violence: The pediatrician's role. *Pediatrics, 94*, 608-616.

Whitney, I., & Smith, P.K. (1993). A survey of the nature and extent of bullying in junior/middle and secondary schools. *Educational Research, 35*(1), 3-25.

That bullying can lead to sexual harassment is noted by:

Keise, C. (1992). *Sugar and spice? Bullying in single-sex schools.* Staffordshire, England: Trentham Books.

Stein, N. (1993). No laughing matter: Sexual harassment in K-12 schools. In E. Buchwald, P.R. Fletcher, & M. Roth (Eds.), *Transforming a rape culture* (pp. 311-331). Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

That the links between bullying and sexual harassment should be discussed in age-appropriate ways is reported in the* Bullyproof *unit:

Stein, N. (1996). *Bullyproof.* Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

The Harris Poll survey of sexual harassment in schools is reported in:

American Association of University Women (AAUW) (1993). *Hostile hallways: The AAUW survey on sexual harassment in America's schools.* Washington, D.C.: Author.

That students who report harassing behaviour have difficulty receiving help is noted by:

Lee, V.E., Croninger, R.G., Linn, E., & Chen, X. (in Press). The culture of sexual harassment in secondary schools. *American Educational Research Journal.*

The prohibitions against hand-holding are reported in:

Maroney, T. (1995, January 21). Coming unhinged over hand-holding ban. *Boston Globe*, pp. 1, 9.

That children rehearse being social spectators is from:

Stein, N. (1993), see above.

That children can be taught to see themselves as "justice makers" is argued by:

Hooks, B. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking Black.* Boston: South End Press.

The closing quotes are selections from the ethnographies which White, middle-class, eighth grade students kept as part of a pilot curriculum development project. This pilot project, which involved approximately fifty Massachusetts classroom teachers in grades six through twelve in the fall of 1993, resulted in the publication:

Stein, N., Sjostrom, L. (1994). *Flirting or hurting? A teacher's guide on student-to-student sexual harassment in schools (for grades six through twelve).* Washington D.C.: National Education Association.

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set special:
STUDENTS AT RISK
9

WHY SO MANY ADOLESCENT GIRLS WANT TO LOSE WEIGHT

Vivienne Adair and **Robyn Dixon**

Education Department
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Adele Jackson

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Why so many adolescent girls want to lose weight

IN THE WESTERN WORLD there has been increasing concern recently about the eating behaviours of teenagers, especially girls. Magazines, newspapers and television documentaries have highlighted some of the most extreme cases which have resulted in conditions such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Although these cases are relatively rare with only about two percent of those girls who diet going on to develop these conditions, about two-thirds of all teenage girls will diet at some stage.

Of more direct concern to teachers are the numbers of girls who attempt to lose weight through dieting who would be categorised as having a disordered attitude to eating or who show disordered eating behaviour. Why do such high numbers of girls want to lose weight? Research has shown that there are a number of reasons. With puberty, and the associated emergence of sex characteristics, girls develop extra fat whereas boys develop muscle. This normal growth pattern not only changes body shape but also affects body weight. Studies have shown high levels of dissatisfaction with this "new" body-shape which is particularly emphasised in those girls who have serious investment in activities such as ballet, athletics, modelling and swimming. The current Western portrayal of an "ideal" figure as thin, which advertising infers as being a necessary state for being "happy" and "successful", combines to produce the dissatisfaction and negative body image. For many adolescents the difference between their actual body shape and the ideal body shape makes them want to lose weight either by skipping meals, counting calories, exercising, drinking lots of water or smoking cigarettes. In some cases, more extreme behaviour is used like fasting, crash-dieting, vomiting, or using laxatives, diet pills or fluid tablets.

> "...If her father dieted, a girl was more likely to crash diet..."

AN AUSTRALIAN STUDY was designed to find out why teenagers might want a different body size and what they thought the advantages of being thinner might be. Over 500 boys and girls aged between 13 and 17 were asked questions about being physically fit, being thinner and what they did to become thinner if they were trying to lose weight. In line with previous studies, the boys showed more satisfaction with their body than the girls. Over a third of the girls described themselves as being overweight when they were actually underweight or in the normal range whereas only one twentieth of boys did this.

These teenagers believed that being thinner would make them more healthy. As well, they said that being thinner would make them better looking, increase the number of friends they would have, affect how intelligent people would think they were and make it easier to get what they wanted. Both boys and girls thought that being thinner would affect their happiness. For girls being thinner meant they would be happier but boys said it would have the opposite effect. Except for those who were above the normal weight range the girls said that being thin was related to being fit.

One of the most interesting findings of this study was that very few of the teenagers said that their friends encouraged them to diet. However, nearly a fifth of the girls said that their parents did encourage them to diet. When the weights of these girls were examined, they were in the heavier weight group. The girls whose parents dieted or who were encouraged to diet by their parents were likely to diet more frequently.

AS PART OF A STAGE THREE COURSE at university during 1994 a study was set up using the questionnaire used in the Australian study, to ask some New Zealand pupils about their attitudes to dieting and exercise and the types of dieting they were involved in if they were trying to lose weight. The school chosen was a metropolitan co-educational secondary school which reflected the ethnic and economic population of the Auckland area. We chose to survey all third and fourth formers, which included 232 girls and 205 boys (aged 13–15 years).

Two university students were assigned to each class to supervise the data collection. One student helped the school pupils to complete the questionnaire while the other recorded the weight and height measurements. All the pupils had their weight and height measured in a way which kept the information private. However, some interesting behaviour occurred at this stage of the data collection. Several girls were reluctant to be weighed and a small number refused. Many of the girls made disparaging comments about their weight and their body shape or tried to get on the scales "lightly" to minimise the weight reading (whereas the boys tried to maximise their weight). In two classes where the university students supervising the weigh-in had "model" figures the school girls were so reluctant to have their weight recorded by those women that the university students swapped tasks and assisted in the written questionnaires instead. The weight and height information was used to calculate a Body Mass Index (BMI). According to the BMI, we found that 40 percent were classified as underweight, 44 percent as normal, 12 percent as overweight and 4 percent as obese or very obese.

LIKE THE AUSTRALIAN STUDY, we found that there were a number of girls (18 percent) who said that their parents encouraged them to diet and this group was the group which interested us. On average these girls had significantly higher BMI scores than the girls whose parents did not encourage them to diet but what is more important, exactly half of them were categorised as being in the normal BMI range (43 percent) or underweight (7 percent). This is cause for concern. If parents are encouraging girls who are developmentally normal to diet there is a possibility of triggering an eating disorder.

The girls who were encouraged to diet by their parents when compared with the rest of the girls believed that being thinner would make life better for them in a number of ways such as being happier, more socially acceptable and more successful.

One of the most interesting differences between the two groups of girls was in the dieting methods they reported using. Not only were the girls who were encouraged by their parents to diet likely to have used more dieting meth-

ods, they were also more likely to have used the more extreme methods including those described as pathological such as the use of laxatives. It is also interesting to note that almost a third of this group reported that they smoke cigarettes, which is twice as many as in the group of girls whose parents did not encourage dieting. Overall, girls who were encouraged to diet were more likely than those who had not been encouraged to have used seven of the eleven dieting methods mentioned at the beginning of this article. Another significant finding was the importance of the father in influencing a girl's behaviour. If he dieted his daughter was more likely to have skipped meals, crash dieted or counted calories in order to lose weight than those whose fathers did not diet. In contrast, if a mother dieted this did not appear to influence the daughter's dieting behaviour.

THIS STUDY has highlighted a number of issues which are important to consider. There is now good evidence that not only does the media portray unrealistic expectations of ideal body shapes, but some parents appear to encourage daughters to lose weight when it is not physically indicated. This indicates that it may not be sufficient to educate only the adolescent girls about healthy eating and about normal developmental trends in fat distribution and changing body shape. The involvement of parents — including fathers — may be essential to developing acceptance of body differences and interpreting the messages presented by commercial interests regarding "ideal" physical appearance.

The 1993 summer edition of *The New Zealand Coach* addressed the importance of sport coaches recognising risk behaviours (especially in young women) such as self worth being tied to weight loss. It is important for coaches to be aware that their own attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (such as an over concern with weight, appearance, body shape and dietary restraints) could contribute to increasing the risks. It can be particularly dangerous if coaches of girls demand that athletes stay the same weight while their bodies are developing.

If sports coaches and parents have this impact on girls' attitudes to body image and eating behaviours, it seems reasonable to assume that teachers with whom pupils spend greater periods of their day are also capable of asserting an influence over such attitudes and behaviours. It would therefore seem important that teachers heed the conclusions of Dale Mercier and that school health programmes continue to emphasis healthy eating while at the same time providing information on normal physical development during early adolescence to support young women who are coming to terms with their new "shape".

> "... The girls tried to get on the scales "lightly" whereas the boys tried to maximise their weight."

Sports coaches and teachers who suspect any of their students might have an eating disorder should identify the person who has the best rapport with the student. Ask them to approach the student to express concerns about their general health and well-being. If there is a problem with eating behaviour the aim would be to steer the student to an appropriate health professional for an assessment, for example, to a nutritionist, psychologist or medical practitioner.

The following extract from Clarkson, H. (1994). Eating Disorders. In H. McDowell & D. Ziginskas (Eds.), *"feeling stink" A Resource on Young People's Mental Health Issues for Those Who Work with Them* (pp. 18-22). Wellington: Ministry of Health may be of use in identifying those who need help.

Early signs of anorexia include:
- increasing concern about weight and disgust with body shape
- wearing only baggy or concealing clothing
- frequent washing
- excessive exercising
- refusing to eat with others
- rituals around eating, such as counting mouthfuls, eating from a particular plate only, or taking tiny mouthfuls
- lying about dieting ("I've already eaten")
- moodiness and hostility when asked about dieting.

Early signs of bulimia include:
- increasing isolation from others
- food disappearing, especially high calorie foods
- spending long periods in the toilet especially immediately after meals, sometimes with the tap running for long periods
- shoplifting food
- swollen cheeks (a little like mumps) caused by swelling of the parotid gland
- excessive tooth decay
- a callous at the base of the index finger.

Notes

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The research reported here was conducted as part of the research training and assessment component of a Stage III class in Adolescent Psychology in 1994.

The Australian study designed to find out why teenagers might want a different body size was:

Paxton, S., Werthheim, E., Gibbons K., et al. (1991). Body image satisfaction, dieting beliefs and weight loss behaviours in adolescent girls and boys. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 20*; 361-379.

The importance of sport coaches being aware of risk behaviours is discussed in:

Mercier, D. (1993). Athletes and eating disorders, Part 2. *The New Zealand Coach, Summer.* 20-21.

Further reading:

Earlier New Zealand research in secondary schools showed that 14 percent of the 1 500 girls surveyed displayed attitudes towards weight and eating that could lead to eating disorders, and that between three and eight percent actually had heating disorders:

Lowe, H.C., Miles, S.W., & Richards, C.G. (1985, May). Eating Attitudes in an Adolescent Schoolgirl Population. *New Zealand Medical Journal.*

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THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM CLIMATE FOR AT-RISK LEARNERS

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Although previous research has developed scales that measure the situational variables found in classroom climates, it has failed to address the question of how such climates are created. The purpose of the following case study was to examine how one effective teacher, teaching primarily at-risk learners, created a classroom climate that enhanced learner outcomes. Data, collected through participant observation and interviews, were categorised, analysed, and interpreted using an analytic induction approach. The major assertion generated from the data analyses was that the normative nature of this particular classroom was intimately entwined with academic learning.

For average students enrolled in secondary schools, the classroom is often a dull and uninteresting place. However for those students who have been labelled "at risk" the classroom can be profoundly alienating. In the current literature, the term *at risk* appears to be a euphemism for students who exhibit a wide range of educational problems, including the failure to respond positively to the instruction offered in basic academic skills, the manifestation of unacceptable social behaviour in school, the inability to keep up with their classmates in academic subjects, and a limited repertoire of experiences that provide background for formal education.

Underlying these characteristics of the at-risk learner are complex factors, many of which are outside the control of the school. Social problems such as poverty, dysfunctional family life, lack of positive role models, poor medical care, and inadequate diet complicate the teaching-learning process. These students frequently come to school lacking the cognitive schemata upon which classroom instruction is ordinarily based. The prognosis for the majority of these learners is that they will drop out of school prior to graduation. The nationwide dropout rate in the United States is 30 percent. In urban environments, where poverty is concentrated, the dropout rate is estimated to be as high as 50 percent.

My purpose of this article is to discuss the findings of a qualitative case study of an effective seventh-grade (12-13-year-olds) social studies teacher who taught primarily at-risk students in an urban setting and to describe how she created a classroom environment that diminished the risk factors involved in learning and, as a result, increased the students' level of academic achievement.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The classroom is a critical locus for student interpersonal and educational development. The notion that classrooms have distinct atmospheres or climates that mediate this development has been in the working vocabulary of educators and researchers for years. Previous research has shown that student outcomes, such as subject matter achievement and attitude toward a school subject, might be improved by creating classroom environments that are more conducive to learning. These findings tend to agree with Goodlad's (1984) definition of classroom environment as the physical, emotional, and aesthetic characteristics of the classroom that tend to enhance attitudes toward learning.

In order to identify situational variables in the classroom environment which may account for a significant amount of behavioural variance, various researchers have developed rating scales designed to measure classroom climate. There is, for instance, the Learning Environment Inventory (LEI) which identifies 10 dimensions relevant to classrooms: cohesiveness, diversity, formality, difficulty, apathy, democracy, cliqueness, satisfaction, disorganisation, and competitiveness; and the Classroom Environment Scale.

Research has indicated that anxiety and compulsivity interact with one another and with teaching methods (in a structured setting, compulsive children performed better; in an unstructured environment, anxiety impeded performance) and that significant amounts of variance resided in interactions between students by classrooms (positive student-teacher interactions resulted in course satisfaction and in higher student achievement).

Thus, data from previous research support the assertion that the interaction of a person and setting contributes significant amounts of behavioural variance. One can further assume that having a positive classroom environment is an educationally desirable end in its own right. Moreover, the comprehensive evidence presented by the research establishes that the nature of the classroom environment has a powerful influence on how well students achieve a range of desired educational outcomes. Therefore, constructive educational climates can be viewed as both means to valuable ends and as worthy ends in their own right.

When applied to the at-risk learner, these findings become even more relevant to effective teaching. At-risk learners often enter the classroom discouraged and disillusioned as the result of their repeated failures. Their self-esteem is low, and they frequently believe themselves incapable of learning. A climate that is focused primarily on production and outcomes reinforces these insecurities. They associate the classroom environment with failure; expecting to fail, they often do. By recognising that the learning environment can either enhance or detract from the student's ability to achieve, teachers can help to change this attitude. The question then becomes one of how to create such a classroom climate. By observing and analysing classroom interactions in effective classrooms serving at-risk students, a body of case study research can be developed that will better inform teachers of the various ways in which one may achieve such an environment. Such was the purpose of the following case study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The subject of this study was Mary Morgan (not her real name), a middle school teacher with 24 years of teaching experience. Her effectiveness in teaching at-risk students was determined by the recommendations of teachers, administrators, parents, and former students. I verified these recommendations through preliminary observations.

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I observed the selected teacher daily for 12 weeks in the natural environment of her classroom. I recorded observations in the form of audiotapes and field notes; I especially cited verbal and non-verbal teaching behaviours and patterns, teacher personality characteristics, and the way in which these factors facilitated student learning. Using students as key informants, I triangulated the observations and conclusions of myself, the teacher, and students to increase the accuracy of recorded data.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Mary Morgan taught in a community located in the southeastern United States. It is an area of diverse economic activity containing a broad array of major business, industrial, educational, and health-related institutions. Figures provided by the local Chamber of Commerce at the time of the study indicated an unemployment rate of 5.4 percent for the community, as compared with 7.1 percent for the state and 5.4 percent for the nation. Although the socioeconomic status (SES) of the community was above average when compared with that of the total state, there were pockets of poverty located throughout the community. Recent demographic changes had resulted in a concentration of low-income, minority families in the urban centre of the community. These families, who lived in government housing projects and other low-rent housing districts, constituted the population served by Mary's school.

The inner-city school in this study was located in the central business district because of the commercialisation of the surrounding community. The student population was predominantly Black; the racial composition of the entire seventh grade was 38.1 percent White and 61.9 percent Black. The majority of the students could accurately be described as at risk. Sixty-seven percent received free or reduced lunches, and 58 percent came from single-parent homes.

The focus of this study was Mary's fifth-period Eastern Hemisphere class. The class included 21 students; 29 percent were White and 71 percent were Black. Seventeen of the students had been identified as at risk by the guidance counsellors and the teacher, based on their SES, family network, and prior school performance. From information contributed by the guidance counsellor, I presumed that the majority of these students did not see the benefits of education reflected through their parents. As a result, they exhibited the qualities of hesitancy, fear, and insecurity when confronted with the demands of school. To effectively teach these students, Mary maintained that "a classroom environment which recognised and minimised these attributes had to be developed".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The major assertion generated from the data analyses was that the normative nature of this particular classroom was intimately entwined with academic learning. The classroom ambiance developed through the behaviours and interactions of the teacher and students was one in which the threat of failure was diminished and in which the at-risk students had the opportunity to participate actively in the learning process. The students were provided a "safe-haven" atmosphere that enhanced learning outcomes of at-risk students. The following primary questions were developed as the study progressed:

- What were the effective behaviours exhibited by the teacher?
- How did these behaviours facilitate the student/teacher interactions that led to the development of the safe-haven atmosphere?

The ambiance of Mary's classroom was closely related to her understanding of the students she taught. She argued that at-risk students needed structure and organisation, self-esteem, and a belief in their abilities to learn. In other words, they needed a safe haven that would afford them the opportunity to learn in a non-threatening environment. The climate in Mary's classroom had three identifiable components:

- ✔ a classroom organisation based upon correct standards of behaviour and a sensitivity toward others,
- ✔ a variety of roles assumed by the teacher to give support to the students, and
- ✔ the teacher's enthusiasm for the students.

CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

The specific pattern of classroom organisation selected by Mary had a considerable impact on the manner in which the students and teacher related to each other and on the students' performance. In determining the most appropriate classroom organisation, Mary considered the nature and character of the students she taught. The majority of the students who entered her class exhibited a "loser's mentality". They had faced failure many times in their lives, as demonstrated by their school records, and as a result, they were often insecure, had poor self-concepts, and frequently believed themselves to be incapable of learning much above the basic level. Mary defined her role as having a responsibility to change these students from "losers to winners" by instilling in them a belief in their abilities to learn and a desire to achieve. To accomplish these goals, Mary selected a classroom organisation that provided the students with a risk-free environment.

Mary described her classroom as a place where each child knew that he/she was valued. She explained:

> I think it's important, especially at this age, to give the children a sense of self respect. I think it's important for these children to have a good self-concept, a good self-image. I can sense when they are in my room and from how they behave in other classes, sort of a settling down; sort of a comfortableness in that they know what the structure is.

This type of classroom climate did not happen by accident. Mary entered the classroom at the beginning of the year with a plan in mind. She planned for the class to bond into a co-operative unit based upon the mutual respect of each student for the others. Her plan included a classroom structure that was internalised by the students and that emphasised correct standards of behaviour and a sensitivity toward each other.

In establishing the classroom structure, Mary began the first day by discussing why rules were important. She started with the world and gradually focused on the classroom. In discussing the need for rules and regulations in society, she developed a structure based upon a common understanding. In explaining her reasoning for approaching the year in this way, she said:

> I plan for them to be safe and secure, and in setting some rules it gives them structure and security because they know this is the way we do things, and they are reasonable rules.

The rules were not developed by Mary, but by the students. By soliciting suggestions from the students concerning what the rules of the classroom should be, the rules ceased to be the teacher's rules and became the students' rules. Thus, the students entered into a participatory process for the operation of the classroom for the remainder of the year. Their input had been solicited and valued, thus establishing a relationship between the students and the teacher that was developed more fully as the year progressed.

Over a prolonged period, I observed that the students understood and had actually internalised the rules and regulations. Mary explained:

> Occasionally we will refer to the rules. They seem to know when they get a little bit away from them but they seem to understand that the reason for them is for the safety of everybody and the well-being and harmony of everybody; and that it's necessary to care about each other.

At the beginning of the year, Mary also focused the students' attention on improper behaviour by identifying it as it happened and discussing why it was improper. She and the students then explored alternatives to such behaviour. In analysing this process through the eyes of the students, Julie, a gregarious 13-year-old, said:

> Mrs Morgan didn't put on a tough guy act at the beginning of the year. She didn't say you can't do this or that. She let it work its way out. Like, she would let something happen, and then she would explain to us why this was not appropriate in her class. She teaches us not only what not to do but why we should not do it.

Thus, Mary developed within the students a rationale for specific behaviour. She reinforced the standards of behaviour through consistency, which eventually resulted in the internalisation of the rules and standards of behaviour by the students.

ROLES ASSUMED BY THE TEACHER

Mary taught through example. She said:

> In my class, I try to be an example for the students as far as manners, sensitivity, and consideration for other people are concerned. I think that's important, and I think a lot of children that I teach are not getting that at home.

Mary modelled behaviours by assuming a multitude of roles that included the teacher as a person, a safety net, an encourager, and a counsellor. Each of these roles contributed to the classroom ambiance.

In assuming the role of a person, Mary displayed her awareness of, and caring for, the students as individuals. She allowed her students to share in her life by discussing with them her feelings about life, what was important to her, her values, and personal stories concerning her relationship with her family. She openly admitted her mistakes and developed an understanding among the students that no one is perfect. Although humour was an important element in Mary's classroom, she was careful to avoid sarcasm. She expected the students to treat each other with respect and to use proper manners in the classroom. Mary demonstrated concern for the students outside as well as inside the classroom. The students exhibited a comfortableness in talking with her about their problems. They were not afraid to physically touch her, and Mary never pulled away. She also felt free to touch her students. She often rubbed their backs to gain their attention and sometimes hugged them as they came into class. The students interpreted these behaviours as attitudes of caring and concern. Taurus, a 13-year-old described by his peers as "very scared and sensitive" said:

> Mrs Morgan, she gives me the courage to pick up what I'm doing and do my homework and get up to where I can deal with other subjects. It's like everyday I see her smiling. Her smile just ... a lot of teachers don't smile. Every time I see her smile it gives me the courage to just go on through the next period. No big people scare me in her class.

Julie described Mary as "understanding":

> She takes things from the kid's point of view. I look forward to coming in here. When I have problems, I know I can talk with Mrs Morgan. When I go into other classes I am just there. When I come in here, I'm alive. I look forward to it.

Mary also served as a safety net for her students. She reflected a desire to ensure that students would not fail or experience mental or emotional discomfort in the required class interactions and assignments. To illustrate how this was accomplished, consider the following vignette:

Mary: What do we call the number of people in a region or country?

Jenny: Census.

Mary: Census? It's interesting that you say that because this is the year of the census. Does everyone know what Jenny is talking about when she says census? It's when we count all of the people in the United States. April of 1990 is the census month. I'm glad you said that because we needed to think about that, but I was thinking about something else. Can anybody help me with that?

In the above dialogue we see Jenny, who was an extremely shy and sensitive student, giving an obviously wrong answer. However, instead of merely saying, "No, that is wrong," Mary used the answer to introduce a future topic of study. This let the student know the answer was wrong but did not hurt her self-esteem. As a result, the student was more likely to answer later in the lesson. Thus, Mary had served as her safety net and cushioned her failure. As a result of this behaviour, one student said, "I feel comfortable letting Mrs Morgan know that I don't understand something. I could not come out and say I don't understand in another teacher's class."

The role of teacher as a safety net was closely related to the role of encourager. As an encourager, Mary used positive reinforcement frequently. She used such words as "good", "excellent", "Oh, you are so smart", "I am very proud of you", and "Give yourself a pat on the back". She often accepted the student's answer and then elaborated on it to make another point. In this case, the information used was the student's information that he or she had shared with Mary and the other class members. This encouraged the students to supply more information and to respond to other questions. The result was an active dialogue between teacher and students. Julie explained the interaction in this way: "Mrs Morgan tells us we did a good job or that's really good. Those comments really help a lot. Her approval is very important."

Part of the communication network established by Mary was based on her ability to listen when the students were talking. When a student talked to Mary, she tried to understand exactly what the student was attempting to communicate to her. According to Mary, "What they have to say is valuable. I think one of the most important things is to be a good listener." Randy, a very active 13-year-old who often found it difficult to sit still for a period longer than 10 minutes, said:

> It makes me feel real good when she listens to me because it makes me feel like I have really done something. I love to bring things in to show her. I love to impress Mrs Morgan. It makes me feel good that I have helped her.

Because of this attitude, the students felt free to discuss a wide range of topics with Mary. They knew she would accept their comments and would be honest and truthful with them. This built a relationship of trust between the students and the teacher.

By assuming the role of counsellor, Mary helped the students with their personal problems as well as problems they were having in other classes. This talk took place both inside and outside of the class and was usually student initiated. For example, one day Taurus came to class crying. Blair, a student who exhibited compassion for everyone in the class, told Mary that Taurus had a problem and that he was crying. The teacher thanked Blair and said that she would speak to him. Mary knelt beside Taurus and talked quietly with him concerning his problem. Later, as I questioned Taurus about his feelings pertaining to Mrs Morgan, he said:

> Mrs Morgan, she brightens my day. It's like she cares about us. She's really nice to talk to because she deals with us. She likes to help out with our problems at home and at school. She acts like she cares more about us than she does herself.

Julie summed up the situation when she said, "I would come to her before I would go to the counsellor. I feel safer with her. She doesn't threaten me. I feel secure with her."

TEACHER'S ENTHUSIASM FOR STUDENTS

Mary's enthusiasm for her students has been acquired developmentally and is conditioned by both her life experiences and her experience in the formal educational setting. Over time, certain attitudes toward others and even certain dispositions toward teaching have developed

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and are carried into the teaching role. Mary has taught at every grade level from Grade 3 to 12. However, she has decided that seventh grade is where she belongs. In describing the seventh-grade student, she said:

> I think the seventh grade is so much fun because you really never know what they are going to say. I like this grade so much. You really have to like seventh grade to teach it. If you don't like seventh grade, you have no business teaching it.

The atmosphere in Mary's class was relaxed. The students crowded around her before class and told her things that were happening in school and to them personally. She always paid attention to them and had a warm smile on her face. The students liked her smile. Julie observed that Mary "never seems mad". She said:

> It doesn't seem like you could get her real angry. I know you probably could, but she doesn't show it. I've had other teachers in the past where if they had a bad day at their house or had a fight or something, they would come and take it out on their students. But she doesn't. When she comes to school, it's like a whole new dimension.

Freedom of movement was another component of Mary's relationship with her students. Mary understood that this age group was active and social. When the students participated in group assignments, she observed their movements. Instead of scolding them for moving without permission, she often praised their show of initiative and responsibility for their own learning. During such group activities, the students could be observed freely exchanging conversation and laughing, but all were clearly on task.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Mary's classroom climate was created primarily through her exhibited behaviours, which nurtured the emotional needs of her students. Showing care, respect, and physical closeness demonstrated these qualities. The classroom organisation that she developed diminished the possibility of failure in her room and developed within the students a sense of safety and security. These results helped to increase the students' level of academic achievement and their formation of more positive attitudes toward school and self. These outcomes were demonstrated both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Quantitatively, the progression of scores on six-week examinations confirmed the increased level of academic achievement. At the end of the first six-week grading period, the median score for the class was 58. By the third grading period, the median score had increased to 65, and by the fifth grading period, the median score was 72. SRA reading scores also increased from a mean in September of 5.9 to a mean in April of 7.1.

An equally important measure of learning outcomes was gathered from the qualitative data concerning attitudes toward school, learning, and the ability to learn. These data were collected from student interviews, participant observation field notes, and an archival search of attendance records and behaviour referral forms. They confirmed a reduction of inappropriate classroom behaviour, an increase in attendance, and a reduction in the number of assignments not completed. When questioned concerning their attitudes toward the study of Eastern Hemispheric Studies, the class consensus was "In Mrs Morgan's room, it's fun to learn."

What does this study offer to teachers who work with at-risk students? It suggests that many of the routine organisational decisions made by teachers have important consequences that are not evident when the teacher focuses only on immediate outcomes. It is important that teachers be aware that many decisions about classroom organisation have ramifications for students' beliefs about themselves and about tasks. These beliefs, in turn, will mediate the effects of academic instruction.

When teachers can provide environments in which students have adequate information about the environment on which to base decisions, and in which students do not feel that their sense of competence is personally threatened by public competition, students' motivational beliefs will more likely develop in a direction that supports self-regulation and enhances learning outcomes.

NOTES

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That average students often find their classroom dull and boring is quoted from:

Goodlad, J.I. (1984). *A place called school: Prospects for the future.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

The definitions of "at risk" are from:

Howard, M.A., & Anderson, R.J. (1978). Early identification of potential school dropouts: A literature review. *Child Welfare 57*(4), 221-31.

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VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

principals' perspectives

COLIN Mc CRAITH, *COBURG PRESTON SECONDARY COLLEGE*

Overall there is little reliable data available regarding the level of violence in Australian schools, although there is a perception by teachers that they are having to deal with increases in violence both in quality and degree. A 1993 survey of 43 schools by the Victorian Association of State Secondary principals found that 16 schools reported violent incidents towards staff. The effect of potential violence on the capacity of teachers to teach is easy to imagine but difficult to quantify. Trespasser violence was seen to be an increasing problem.

The Role and Accountability Statement for Principals in Government Schools in Victoria states that the principal must plan, implement, and monitor arrangements to ensure the safety, security, and general well being of all students in attendance at the school. The most frequently stated right in school charters under the Schools of the Future program in Victoria has been the right to safety. Schools have an obvious desire to project the image to parents that they are institutions where students are both safe and secure.

During Term I of 1992 the Victorian government school of which I was the vice principal was involved in a vicious inter-school brawl with a neighbouring Catholic boys college. The venue for the brawl was the forecourt of the local railway station, situated between the two schools. Our school was besieged by the media for approximately two weeks and rumour of further inter-school problems continued for two terms.

One month after the first incident a senior class at our school was "invaded" by five students from another neighbouring government school. Under the pretext of being new students they threatened a very experienced teacher. During Term II of that year, the vice principal of a neighbouring government school was severely assaulted by a group of students from another school in the grounds of his school. Further, several weeks later, the staff of a neighbouring primary school were besieged by a drug-crazed youth as they awaited a parents meeting that evening.

These incidents were all very unusual, destabilising for the schools involved, and the source of multiple community rumours. It was in this climate that I initiated discussions with staff at Latrobe University to undertake a research project that would ascertain whether other schools had experienced significant problems of violence and what proactive and reactive measures schools had implemented. I was of the opinion that if I could document programs and make conclusions, then perhaps I could produce material that would be of practical use to principals.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The research was undertaken in the northern wedge of the greater Metropolitan Melbourne. Traditionally employment in this area was centred around the textiles, footwear, clothing, and automative industries. Structural economic changes and recession caused massive adult and youth unemployment which rates amongst the highest in Australia, particularly long term unemployment. The region has one of the lowest rates of participation in tertiary education and income tax returns indicate significant poverty.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE RESEARCH

After a considerable period of background reading it become clear that little research had been undertaken on this topic in Australia. I trialled questionnaires and developed one which could ascertain the perspective of principals, vice principals, and site principals. For the purposes of the questionnaire I defined violence in a school setting as being where any members of the school community (student, staff, parent, or visitor) is assaulted, intimidated, or abused. For the purpose of this article "principal" refers to principals, vice principals and site principals.

The questionnaire estimated the relative and absolute significance of violence for principals for their schools. It measured the frequency and significance for principals of 19 possible forms of school violence. Principals were then asked to consider why various forms of violence are significant for their school, whether there is a pattern of occurrence and what proactive and reactive programs/steps have been undertaken and the relative success of such programs/steps.

The second section of the questionnaire examined possible causes of violence in schools and solutions that schools have attempted to implement. (See Notes.)

The final section measured changes to the level or nature of school violence as it affects nine aspects of school operations and planning.

The questionnaire was administered in person. I interviewed principals in 33 secondary schools, 31 being government schools, one Catholic school and an Anglican school from outside the Northern region. Two of the schools are girls' schools and the remainder are co-educational schools. The schools had a total of 21,975 students as at February, 1994.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF RESEARCH

When principals rated the time and resources that schools invest in setting up and maintaining procedures to prevent and respond to violence, compared to all other issues, on 1-10 scale, the mean result of the 33 surveyed schools was 3.8, with a range of 1-8. In addition to this relative measurement, principals were asked to rate in absolute terms how significant an issue violence is for their school. On a scale of extremely significant (5) to insignificant (1), the mean score was 3.5, which indicates that the mean is between significant and very significant.

This would appear to indicate that although school violence is perceived as a significant issue, it does not devour relatively large amounts of time and energy. This is probably because unlike issues such as the huge task of a school implementing the Schools of the Future

program and curriculum development, school violence is a non-continuing issue with peaks, sometimes severe, and large troughs.

This suggestion is perhaps confirmed by the principals' response to the question of whether there had been any time during the past 12 months when they would have considered school violence as being one of the most important aspects of their operation. Twenty-four of the 33 principals considered that violence had been a dominating issue for them. The period of time involved was usually one to two weeks, although for some schools the problem had continued for up to one term.

EXAMPLES OF WHEN VIOLENCE IS A DOMINANT ISSUE

- Violence initiated by outside people.
  - Severe assault by outsiders on vice principal.
  - As a result of a "gate crashed" party and fight during the weekend, the disturbance overflowed into the school for the following week, with outsiders invading the school and weapons being involved.
  - Staff demoralised by the physical assaults on two co-ordinators by an outside person. The staff suspected that these were "paybacks" because of discipline action Year Level Co-ordinators had taken. Threatening notes to staff were left under doors and on staff car windscreens.
  - Continual harassment of school by outsiders during recess and lunch times (three schools).
  - Invasion of school by ethnic gangs believed to be organised in suburbs well distant from the schools (three schools).
- Violence initiated by ex-students.
  - Group of ex-students, who had been "advised to leave", returned to the school to vent their frustrations as a result of them considering that they had been unfairly treated.
  - Ex-student continually harassed school and eventually drove a car at the principal with the intention of causing severe injury.
  - Ex-students with criminal records, who suspected that current students gave information to the police, tried to intimidate the students by continually trespassing and hiding in school toilets.
- Violence initiated by current students.
  - School had to cope with extremely violent young people who had enrolled at the school from a nearby Health and Community Services medium term housing unit.
  - New school, before it had developed and implemented a Code of Student Conduct, had severe problems with student violence.
  - Damage to school in excess of $10,000 caused at night by rampaging year 12 students.
  - Outbreak of physical assaults by students on other students over several days (three schools).
  - Multi-campus school which rationalised campuses into years 7-10 and 11-12 campuses, and also received many students from a nearby closed school, experienced continual student fights and assaults.
- Violence initiated by students from other schools.
  - Continued assaults upon students at local railway station by students from another school.
  - Milling of several hundred students from two schools, reacting to a rumour. Students dissipated because of the arrival of police cars and helicopters.

In summary, it appears that many of the examples of violence that principals have identified as being those specific times where violence has been one of the most important aspects of their operation, are incidents that involve outside people, ex-students and students from other schools. In these situations the principal has no direct jurisdiction over such people and these people are not responsible to the school community. It would also appear that it is extremely difficult to predict such situations and therefore difficult for school administrators to be proactive in preventing such incidents.

FREQUENCY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF 19 FORMS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

As indicated earlier, those issues as above, although significant for principals, may not occur very frequently. To investigate this issue, principals were asked to assess the frequency and significance for their school of 19 forms of violence that may occur in their school. See Table 1 for the mean scores (where 4 is the maximum score and 1 is the minimum score) and ranking of 19 forms of violence.

It would appear that for this group of schools the more frequent forms of violence, occurring approximately once per term or more, include: student assaults, the presence of, and verbal abuse by, trespassers, and sexual harassment between students. The forms of violence which are very rare include: assaults on teachers by outsiders, students and family members, students from different schools assaulting each other, groups of students assaulting one student and sexual harassment of staff by students. Those forms that principals consider to be more than significant include: outside people assaulting students, verbally abusing staff, loitering outside the school and trespassing. Violence which is significant for the schools includes: verbal abuse of teachers, student/student assaults sexual harassment, and students possessing weapons.

Further analysis of the principals' responses showed that the forms of violence which principals consider to be the most significant for their schools are not necessarily those with the highest frequency, that is, those forms relating to the intrusion into schools by outside

TABLE 1: **MEAN SCORE AND RANKING OF THE FREQUE**

Item	Form of Violence	Mean Score		Ranking	
		Frequency	Significance	Frequency	Significanc
1.	Student verbally abusing teacher	3.6	3.4	1	2
2.	Trespassers being on school premises	3.4	3.1	2	12
3.	One student physically assaulting another	3.2	3.1	3	11
4.	Two students physically assaulting each other	3.1	3.3	4	7
5.	Outside people verbally abusing staff when challenged	3.0	3.4	5	4
6.	Sexual harassment between students	3.0	3.2	6	9
7.	Students possessing weapons at school	2.6	3.4	7	5
8.	A potentially dangerous group/individual loitering outside school	2.4	3.3	8	6
9.	Parents/family members verbally abusing staff	2.4	3.2	9	8
10.	Your students assaulting each other outside of school	2.3	2.8	10	18
11.	Outsiders assaulting students because of non-school conflict inside the school	2.2	3.4	11	3

The calculation of the correlation co-efficient for the mean score of frequency and significance is 0.608. This indicates that a correlation between

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people. Student abuse of teachers has a very high ranking for both frequency and significance. This is probably because of the stress it causes teachers and the administrative time that it devours. Although trespassers being present is very frequent, it does not possess a particularly high ranking for significance, perhaps because administrators are proficient at dealing with the problem. Although student assault occurs frequently, it is not a priority problem in significance because most schools have well established and known practices in coping with this problem. On the other hand, although weapon possession is not a frequent occurrence, its potential for disaster is apparent in the high ranking that principals give to its significance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

This research also shows that the schools with strong leadership, where there is a recognition by staff that violent behaviour can be changed, where a whole-school approach to violence is developed, and where emphasis is placed on student responsibilities to themselves and others, have a good chance of solving the problem of violence.

Bullying is receiving attention in schools. Australian research has now consistently found an incidence of one in seven Australian school children being involved in bullying to the extent that it impairs their performance. Bullying appears to peak in the early secondary years, when physical differences between students due to variability in the onset of puberty are most apparent. There are many programs available on this topic.

The successful solutions suggested by the principals in the researched group of schools can be divided into the following types of solutions.

PENALTY SOLUTIONS

- Make sure there are specific, known penalties for violence which are clearly set out and fully understood.
- Use student contracts/behaviour cards for violent students.
- Make sure students understand that anyone causing the name of the school to be disgraced will suffer severe penalties – covers all contingencies.
- Deliberately allow rumours of penalties to flourish.
- Use "time out" rooms/suspension/ detention.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT SOLUTIONS

- Make the parents responsible for student behaviour, particularly the use of a strong [influential and well respected] family member. Make the expectations clear upon enrolment.
- Encourage and support families in the laying of criminal charges for assault against students – make this a known school policy.
- Implement access to effective parenting courses operated by outside agencies. The challenge is to encourage the parents for whom the program is most relevant to participate.
- Use religious leaders to work with families to enforce school policies.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE SOLUTIONS

- Divide the school into the smallest units possible.
- Implement a student management structure whereby Year Level Co-ordinators and Student Welfare Co-ordinators have high status and the maximum affordable time allowance.
- Have co-ordinators and Pastoral Care Teachers follow students throughout their years at the school.
- Reduce student movement throughout the school by using multi-purpose classrooms as much as possible.
- Implement a program of lunchtime activities and invest in sporting equipment and facilities that students can and will use at lunchtimes.
- Involve the Student Representative Council.
- Shorten lunch and recess times, if and when necessary.

CURRICULUM SOLUTIONS

- Develop a curriculum which emphasises human relations, conflict management, self-esteem and anger management.
- Encourage peer support programs.
- Develop a school culture whereby the expectation is that student bystanders will prevent/stop violent acts.
- Encourage programs and activities which will bond teachers and students together.
- Allow outside community agencies to implement proactive programs in the school.
- Offer anger management programs.
- Use outside foundations to provide finance for youth workers to work with students at risk. The aim is to prevent homelessness by supporting the family and student.
- Offer study and organisation skill programs which might help some students cope and gain success.
- Initiate intensive group and whole-year counselling programs.
- Use the police for group discussion on the realities of violence.
- Involve speakers from different ethnic cultures to explain their attitudes, values, beliefs and principles, to the staff and students.

OTHER SOLUTIONS

- Keep a constant network operating of "what's on".
- Offer a less formal timetable for Mondays, which are often bad days for students from broken homes.
- Make sure senior staff are visibly present in the yard on Fridays, when everyone is tired and teachers are "grumpy".

AND SIGNIFICANCE OF 19 FORMS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Item	Form of Violence	Mean Score		Ranking	
		Frequency	Significance	Frequency	Significance
12.	Outsiders assaulting students inside the school because of a school related conflict	2.2	3.6	12	1
13.	Sexual harassment of staff by students	2.1	3.1	13	10
14.	Your students and students from another school assaulting each other outside both schools	1.8	3.0	14	13
15.	A group of students assaulting another student	1.7	2.9	15	14
16.	Your students assaulting students from another school inside the other school	1.5	2.8	16	17
17.	Outsiders assaulting staff	1.4	2.8	17	15
18.	Student assaulting teacher	1.4	2.8	18	16
19.	Parents/family members assaulting staff	1.2	2.2	19	19

factors is inconclusive.

- Ensure extra yard duty by senior staff on very windy or hot days.
- Make sure administrators are in corridors at the start of classes to solve the problem of teacher lateness, which can lead to violence between students.

SOLUTIONS TO OUTSIDE PEOPLE INITIATING VIOLENCE

PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS

- Develop a school Safety Committee to review security, and a "Displan" program to operate when the school is "under threat" (includes students inside, staff outside).
- Have a plan whereby staff, *as a group*, confronts any potentially dangerous group of outsiders.
- Develop a school culture whereby students inform staff of the presence of outsiders. This should be part of student citizenship.
- Develop a personal and effective relationship with senior local police.

REACTIVE SOLUTIONS

- Use car registration number and ring the emergency police number, not the local police.
- Dramatic arrest incident staged by school and police. (For instance, one school worked with police to arrange a scenario, as the school was being dismissed and therefore large numbers of students were leaving, whereby the police arrived with sirens blazing and lights flashing to bundle a youth who had been "stalking" the school into a police car.)
- Use undercover police.
- Consider asking police to visit the homes of ex-students who are causing problems. This can decrease outsider problems.
- If a violent incident has attracted adverse media attention, hire a professional journalist to provide a media release.
- Take a video camera outside when intruders are present — it doesn't have to work.
- Provide mobile phone/UHF radios for staff on yard duty to alert staffroom and administrators of problems.
- Use whole-school assemblies to turn around violent incidents. Harness the energy and shock the perpetrators into constructive roles.
- Consider installing a high fence around the school with the only access gate kept locked after school hours.
- One female principal thought that outsiders were usually surprised when confronted by a woman and were less likely to be aggressive to a woman because she is not challenging their "manhood".
- If the schools' own students cause problems at another school, insist they apologise at the other school then proceed with normal discipline procedures.

NOTES

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This research was carried out as part of a Masters Degree in Education, and has been reported in:

Mc Craith, C. (1994). *Violence in schools: Principals' perspective.* Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, University of Newcastle.

The possible causes of violence included in the questionnaire were:

- Sub-culture of the local community/family is such that violence is a normal method of response.
- Depressed economic conditions lead to frustration and violence within the family and these overflow into the school.
- Students have the talent and energy to assume adult roles, but because of changes to the structure of employment, cannot become independent of parents and become frustrated, angry and violent.
- Lack of jobs for senior students who want to be at work not school, causes them to become frustrated, angry and violent.
- Students realise that because of their background they may not be able to achieve rewarding careers and are consequently frustrated.
- Students have emotional disorders/defective personalities.
- Students perceive themselves as failures and trouble-makers and act accordingly.
- Decreases in staffing and community service supports.
- Teachers using inappropriate teaching styles that lead to frustration and anger.
- Violence in the media and copy-cat behaviour leads to a general acceptance of violent behaviour.
- Violence is a way for boys to demonstrate their masculinity.
- Teachers causing an escalation of a minor incident into a violent incident, because of their lack of perception and skills in student management.
- Families are collapsing and students feel angry.
- Continual, but unreported, teasing builds up and explodes into violence.
- Students have little bonding to the school, little commitment or attachment, and few aspirations.
- Students view teachers as having no real power.
- Incompetent teachers fail to take action when appropriate and such lack of action leads to the escalation of an incident.
- Lack of participation in sport and other physical outlets.
- Basic racism.
- Basic sexism.
- Students coming into the school from a closed school/campus feel disenchanted and angry.
- Parents have lost control of their daughters and sons.
- Teachers who are stressed, and with low morale, overreact to a minor incident, which leads to a violent incident.
- Students are bored and are seeking excitement and thrills.
- Insensitive teachers who bait and tease students and cause violent student reactions.
- Because of staff reductions, school organisational structure becomes more inflexible, causing students to become frustrated and angry.
- Staffing reductions prevent the school from providing the necessary pastoral care and counselling that may prevent violence within the school.
- Lack of sufficient and appropriate resources for integration students, who have a disposition towards violent behaviour.
- Administrators lack appropriate powers to exclude violent students on a permanent basis.

The House of Representatives Report on violence is:

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (1994). *Sticks and stones : Report of violence in Australian schools.* Australian Government Publishing Service.

That the principal must plan, implement and monitor arrangements to ensure the safety of students is from:

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That the right to safety is the most frequently quoted right is from:

D.S.E. Victoria, (1994). *Schools of the future: Guidelines for developing a school charter.*

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